



PRESS RELEASE

Ocean County College wins RUSSELL ATHLETIC 'Together We R' Team Award

NEW ORLEANS (April 8, 2013) – The Ocean County College women's basketball program has been honored by RUSSELL ATHLETIC and the Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) as the recipient of the second annual RUSSELL ATHLETIC "Together We R" Team Award. Head coach Dana Kovich was presented with the award at the third annual WBCA Awards Show.

In its second year, the "Together We R" Team Award honors programs that have strived to succeed in the face of adversity, overcoming extraordinary circumstances such as an unforeseen team crisis, barrier or unfortunate situation that caused extra stress. The team must exemplify strong commitment to core values of togetherness, courage, unparalleled work ethic and heart, and must personify the "Together We R" belief that teams are stronger than individuals.

From the initial submissions, a committee composed of WBCA past presidents narrowed it to four finalists – Cal State Fullerton, Ocean County College, Oklahoma and Purdue. Each institution submitted a video telling their story which was posted on the WBCA's YouTube channel. Fans were asked to watch the videos and show their support by voting for who they believed should be the winner of the award. The Vikings garnered the most fan votes with more than 1,600 views and 275 "likes" on their video, and received one additional vote when the selection committee met to determine the winner.

Ocean County College was shut down for two weeks after being affected by Hurricane Sandy, the devastating storm that hit in late October. Kovich lived in the Barrier Islands where there was utter devastation, losing her home. The start of the season was pushed back to allow the team ample time to regroup, and the coaches and players participated in numerous community service projects. When the season began, the Vikings started out with three wins and seven losses, but the team came together and went on to win the 2013 NJCAA Division III Region XIX Women's Basketball Championship.

Below is an excerpt from the submission made on the team's behalf:

"We knew the storm was coming. We live on the ocean block and we knew on Sunday night that we would be under water," said Kovich. "The first phone call was to the players to make sure they were okay and it was almost as important to do as worrying about the money."

Although the Vikings struggled at the start of the season, they ended the regular

season winning six of their final seven games. Ocean County College lost their final regular season game to Middlesex County College, but the Vikings turned around and beat the Lady Colts in the opening round of the 2013 Region XIX Division III women's basketball tournament. The Vikings went on to win their next two games before upsetting second-seed Cumberland County College to win the tournament. The Vikings returned to the NJCAA Division III Women's Basketball championships for the first time since 1999.

"Being able to overcome tremendous adversity is the truest sign of a team," said Russell Athletic Senior Vice President Gary Barfield. "At Russell Athletic, team is our core, and 'Together We R.' Ocean County College has fought, preserved and worked together as a team to move past the difficulties that have fallen upon them. It is my pleasure, along with Russell Athletic, to present Ocean County College with the Together We R award."

"Hurricane Sandy affected so many people's lives. All natural disasters eventually seem to be forgotten, and although this disaster struck in October, there are still people who are working hard to get their lives back to normal," said WBCA CEO Beth Bass. "Coach Kovich is a true example of a great leader and by Ocean County College winning the 'Together We R' award people are reminded that although such an event may not be talked about in the news anymore individuals are still coping with the after effects."

"The perseverance and selflessness of the Ocean County College women's basketball team in the wake of Superstorm Sandy is truly inspiring," said Barfield. "This group of young women has overcome tremendous odds to be both successful on the court and at putting their community first."

About RUSSELL:

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About the WBCA:

Founded in 1981, the Women's Basketball Coaches Association promotes women's basketball by unifying coaches at all levels to develop a reputable identity for the sport and to foster and promote the development of the game as a sport for women and girls. For more information on the WBCA, please visit wbca.org.