



PRESS RELEASE

California University of Pennsylvania wins Russell Athletic 'Together We R' Team Award

TAMPA BAY, Florida (April 6, 2015) – The California University of Pennsylvania women's basketball program has been honored by Russell Athletic and the Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) as the recipient of the fourth annual Russell Athletic "Together We R" Team Award. Jess Strom, head coach of the Vulcans, was presented with the award at the Fifth Annual WBCA Awards Show.

In its fourth 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 three finalists – California University of Pennsylvania, Eastern Michigan University and Richmond University. 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. California University of Pennsylvania garnered the most fan votes with more than 6,900 views and 540 "likes" on their video, and received one additional vote when the selection committee met to determine the winner.

On January 18, 2015 the California University of Pennsylvania women's basketball team lost senior Shanice Clark, who passed away from choking on gum according to the initial coroner's report. A couple of months later it was announced that Shanice passed away from a rare blood cell disorder.

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

"Nothing will ever be the same and nothing has ever been the same since that day. For the rest of the season you just take the strength with you and you hope that Shanice is watching over you and you hope that these kids can find it in themselves to play and that it's more about life than winning a basketball game."

California University of Pennsylvania went on to win nine of their final 11 regular season games and won the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Tournament. The Vulcans also won the NCAA Division II Women's Basketball Championship finishing the season with a 32–4 overall record.

"It's unfortunate that any program has to experience such tragedy. However, the determination and perseverance of the Vulcans and their focus to finish the season in honor of their teammate is a perfect demonstration of what one can overcome when working together as a team," said Russell Athletic Senior Vice President and General Manager, Robby Davis. "Everyone associated with the program came together to ensure that this team had the support it needed to continue. It's an honor to recognize California University of Pennsylvania with the 'Together We R' Award."

"It's impossible to understand why tragedies happen. Our women's basketball family mourns the loss of Shanice. However, it is inspiring to see the profound impact one person can have on others. It's hard to fathom what her family, team and institution has had to endure over the past several months. Losing a loved one is painful and with Shanice's case being so unique, we offer the Vulcans our utmost respect for their response of unification and commitment in Shanice's honor to an exceptional season." said WBCA Executive Director Danielle Donehew.

"The WBCA applauds the efforts of the coaching staff led by Jess Strom, the student-athletes, and administration at California University of Pennsylvania in their response to this tragedy. Their efforts to honor Shanice and comfort their student-athletes are an excellent example to us all and a reminder that our women's basketball family and platform extends far beyond the basketball court. The California University of Pennsylvania women's basketball program is very deserving of the Russell Athletic 'Together We R' Award."

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About Russell Athletic:

For more than 100 years, Russell Brands, LLC, has supplied America's teams with the latest innovations to help them perform at their best and is a leading supplier of apparel and team uniforms at the high school, college and professional levels. Russell's collegiate licensed products and athletic wear are broadly distributed and marketed through department stores, sports specialty stores, retail chains and college bookstores. For more information, visit www.RussellAthletic.com and follow news and updates on Twitter [@RussellAthletic](https://twitter.com/RussellAthletic).

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.