



## THE BIG EAST CONFERENCE

The 2008-09 academic year will be the 30th for The BIG EAST Conference. While the league has gone through membership changes since its birth, it has never been stronger. This academic year will mark the conference's fourth year as the nation's largest Division I-A conference.

The goals of the BIG EAST have never changed. The league aims and expects to compete at the highest level and does so with integrity and sportsmanship. The student-athletes of the member schools continue to maintain the league's proud tradition of success.

BIG EAST teams earned their share of recognition at the highest levels in 2007-08. Four women's teams advanced to their respective NCAA Final Fours: Connecticut field hockey and women's basketball, Notre Dame soccer and Syracuse lacrosse.

Individually in men's sports, Villanova's Bobby Curtis was the NCAA outdoor track champion in the 5,000 meters. Connecticut's O'Brian White won the M.A.C. Hermann Trophy, the highest individual honor in soccer. Two years ago, BIG EAST male and female student-athletes were Hermann Trophy winners.

In men's basketball, the BIG EAST tied its own record set in 2006 by earning eight NCAA Championship bids. BIG EAST women's teams have received eight NCAA invitations in each of the past two years. The combined 16 men's and women's berths in 2008 was an NCAA first.

The quality of BIG EAST football has never been more balanced. Six of the league's eight squads were nationally ranked in 2007. For the third straight year, the BIG EAST representative in the Bowl Championship Series won its BCS bowl game.

The BIG EAST continued to produce student-athletes who were at the forefront of athletic and academic achievement. Nineteen BIG EAST players were chosen to their respective ESPN The Magazine Academic All-America Teams, including eight first-team selections.

The BIG EAST became the nation's largest Division I-A group in 2005-06 when five new members began competing. The new schools were: University of Cincinnati, DePaul University, University of Louisville, Marquette University and the University of South Florida.

BIG EAST institutions reside in nine of the nation's top 34 largest media markets, including New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Tampa, Pittsburgh, Hartford, Milwaukee and Cincinnati. With its newest members, BIG EAST markets contain almost one fourth of all television households in the U.S.

Since opening its doors in 1979, the league has won 25 national championships in six different sports and 125 student-athletes have won individual national titles.

The BIG EAST has always been able to boast that some of its best students are also some of its best athletes. More than 370 student-athletes have earned academic all-America honors. Last year in football, Louisville quarterback Brian Brohm, who finished his career as the BIG EAST's career passing leader, was one of the league's eight first-team ESPN The Magazine Academic All-America team picks.

Also, Connecticut's Rebecca Lobo, one of the most heralded women's basketball players in the history of the sport, was named to the CoSIDA Academic All-America Hall of Fame in 2008. Lobo, a two-time BIG EAST Player of the Year, led the Huskies to the 1995 NCAA national championship.

The BIG EAST has enjoyed tremendous basketball success, especially in this decade. In 2003-04, Connecticut became the first school in NCAA history to win the men's and women's NCAA titles in the same season. In '02-03, the BIG EAST became the first conference in NCAA history to win the men's and women's titles



in the same year when the Syracuse men and the Connecticut women captured their respective national championships. In men's basketball, BIG EAST squads have won three of the last 10 NCAA championships. BIG EAST women's teams have taken five of the last nine NCAA titles.

Proactive movement has been a signature strategy for the conference that was born in 1979. The BIG EAST continually turns challenges into opportunities to become stronger.

In the spring of 2001, the BIG EAST added women's lacrosse and rowing to its growing list of sports. The first women's golf championship was held in the spring of 2003. In 2007, the league conducted its first women's lacrosse championship tournament. In 2009-10, the BIG EAST will begin sponsorship of men's lacrosse, its 24th sport.

The BIG EAST became a reality on May 31, 1979, following a meeting of athletic directors from Providence College, St. John's, Georgetown and Syracuse Universities. Seton Hall, Connecticut and Boston College completed the original seven school alliance.

While the membership has both increased and changed, the focus of the BIG EAST has not wavered. The conference reflects a tradition of broad based programs, led by administrators and coaches who place a constant emphasis on academic integrity. Its student athletes own significantly high graduation rates and their record of scholastic achievement notably shows a balance between intercollegiate athletics and academics.

Any successful organization needs outstanding leadership. Michael Tranghese, the league's first full-time employee, and for 11 years the associate to Dave Gavitt, became Commissioner in 1990. In his first year, he administered the formation of The BIG EAST Football Conference.

For 2009-10, the BIG EAST will undergo one significant change. Tranghese has announced that he will step down from his position on June 30, 2009.

The league has long been considered a leader in innovative concepts in promotion and publicity, particularly regarding television. Those efforts have resulted in unparalleled visibility for BIG EAST student athletes. The conference has enjoyed long-standing relationships with CBS, ESPN, Inc. and ABC.

While BIG EAST basketball games are regular sellouts at campus and major public arenas, including the annual men's BIG EAST Championship in Madison Square Garden, attendance figures also are significant in soccer, women's basketball and baseball games.

More than 550 BIG EAST student-athletes have earned all America recognition and dozens have won individual NCAA national championships. The BIG EAST has been well represented in U.S. or foreign national and Olympic teams. Several athletes earned gold medals in each of the last six summer Olympiads.

The BIG EAST has its headquarters in Providence where the conference administers to more than 5,500 athletes.