



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 2, 2002

CONTACT: Sara Hunt
415-972-2429

**AIR FORCE ACCEPTS INVITATION TO INAUGURAL
DIAMOND WALNUT SAN FRANCISCO BOWL**

Falcons look to secure national rushing title; DeBerry goes for win No. 150

San Francisco, CA – Air Force accepted today an invitation to play in the inaugural Diamond Walnut San Francisco Bowl. The Falcons, who finished the regular season with an 8-4 record, will face an opponent from the Big East Conference on New Year's Eve, Dec. 31, 2002, at 7:30 p.m. at Pacific Bell Park.

"We are honored to be the first team ever invited to the Diamond Walnut San Francisco Bowl," said Air Force Academy Head Coach Fisher DeBerry. "There was a lot of cheering in the weight room when I made the announcement to our players. San Francisco is one of the great cities in America, and we are looking forward to traveling to such a great environment and climate. We will bring a strong football team to the inaugural bowl, and we hope that our program will add to the pageantry of the new game."

Air Force currently leads the nation in rushing, averaging 314.5 yards per game. The Falcons are hoping to secure the teams' first national rushing title and its 19th conference rushing title.

"It's a great honor for a first year bowl to be able to attract a team of this stature and a program with such a great tradition," said Gary Cavalli, executive director of the Diamond Walnut San Francisco Bowl. "Air Force is one of the great stories in college football. Year after year, Coach DeBerry puts together strong teams that, despite some unique challenges, rank among the nation's best."

DeBerry will be going for career win No. 150 at the Bowl. With a 149-82-1 career record in his 19 seasons as the Academy's head coach, he is the winningest coach in service academy football history. His .645 winning percentage is the best in Air Force history, and his 149 wins at Air Force exceed the combined total (134-151-12) of the other four head coaches in school history.

Air Force quarterback Chance Harridge set an NCAA record this season for rushing touchdowns by a quarterback with 22, breaking the previous record of 20 set by Navy's Chris MCCoy in 1997. Harridge's 22 touchdowns is an Air Force record for rushing and total touchdowns, and his 132 points also breaks the mark of Brian Bream's 120 points in 1970.

###