



Today's Scholar-Athletes ~ Tomorrow's Leaders

3773 Corporate Parkway • Suite 190 • Center Valley, PA 18034 • (610) 289-1950 • Fax: (610)-289-1951/52

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Contact Jessica Siegel, *associate media relations director*
jsiegel@patriotleague.com/610.289.1957

Navy's Zahalka Named 2008 Patriot League Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year

Navy swimmer becomes fourth Mid to earn this honor in League history.

Center Valley, Pa. – Navy junior swimmer Kelly Zahalka was voted the 2008 Patriot League Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year, announced Executive Director Carolyn Schlie Femovich Thursday. The Scholar-Athlete of the Year award is the most prestigious award given out by the Patriot League each academic year and is bestowed to one male and one female. The candidates for the Male and Female Patriot League Scholar-Athlete of the Year honors are made up of each of the Patriot League's 23 sport Scholar-Athlete of the Year award winners.

Zahalka earned a place on the Patriot League academic honor roll for the third time in her career with a perfect 4.00 grade-point average during spring 2008. The junior honors history major also holds a 4.00 cumulative GPA through six semesters while minoring in Chinese. The Richmond, Va., native ranks first in her class of 1,075 on both the Academic Order of Merit and the Military Order of Merit and third on the Overall Order of Merit. She is one of 65 juniors nationwide to be tabbed as a 2008 Truman Scholar based upon "leadership potential, intellectual ability and likelihood of making a difference" with the "intent to pursue a career in the government or the not-for-profit sector". As a Truman Scholar she will receive a scholarship to attend graduate school and the opportunity to have an internship with a government agency. She also earned CoSIDA/*ESPN The Magazine* Academic All-American status for the second time with a first-team nod in 2008.

In the pool this season she totaled 24 individual event victories in 37 races. At the 2008 Patriot League Swimming and Diving Championship she ranked second in individual points with 57, which included two gold medals (200-fly and 400 IM) and one second-place showing (200 IM). She became one of only two swimmers in Patriot League history to win the 400 IM event in three consecutive years and is one of 10 swimmers in League history to win the same event in three straight years. She also helped the Mids to first-place finishes in the 200- and 800-freestyle relays. The All-Patriot League honoree set a Patriot League Championship record mark in the 200-fly this year with a time of 2:03.02.

Zahalka is the fourth Mid in Patriot League history to garner the Patriot League Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year award and her honor marks the second year in a row it has gone to a Navy student-athlete. Past Navy winners include Nicole Aunapu (soccer, 1999), Kate Macfarlane (soccer, 2002) and Kirsten Andrews (track and field, 2007).

The winner of each sport's Patriot League Scholar-Athlete of the Year award is put in the running towards the Patriot League Male and Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year honors. Others in contention for this year's Patriot League Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year award were American's Liz Hayes (basketball) and Krystn Hodge (soccer), Army's Jessica Shurtz (tennis), Bucknell's Gillian Nordquist (cross country), Kelly Hoffman (field hockey) and Erin Curatola (softball), Colgate's Meredith Remmer (rowing), Lehigh's Christy Smith (lacrosse) and Navy's Vicki Moore (indoor and outdoor track and field) and Rachel Dougherty (volleyball).

To be eligible for the Patriot League Scholar-Athlete of the Year award, a student-athlete must have at least a 3.20 cumulative grade point average and be a starter or key player in his/her sport. Freshmen are not eligible for this honor.

"Today's Scholar-Athletes, Tomorrow's Leaders" – The Patriot League continually demonstrates that student-athletes can excel at both academics and athletics without sacrificing its high standards. The Patriot League's athletic success is achieved while its member institutions remain committed to its founding principle of admitting and graduating student-athletes that are academically representative of their class. Participation in athletics at Patriot League institutions is viewed as an important component of a well-rounded education.

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