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For Immediate Release

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2009 Patriot League Football Preseason Poll and Award Winners Announced

Holy Cross Earns Preseason Nod while Randolph, Leggiero Take Individual Awards

Bethlehem, Pa. (8/4/09) – After finishing one game off the pace in each of the last three seasons, Holy Cross has been picked to capture the 2009 Patriot League Football Championship in a poll of the League's head coaches and sports information directors, it was announced at Tuesday's Football Media Day at Green Pond Country Club.

The Crusaders were picked first on half of the 14 ballots, and finished with 67 points to earn the top spot. Defending champion Colgate was just behind with six first-place votes and 64 points. Archrivals Lafayette and Lehigh shared the third position in the poll, each garnering 46 points while the Mountain Hawks also took home the remaining first-place vote. Fordham (35), Bucknell (24) and Georgetown (12) round out the rankings.

The poll voters also picked Holy Cross senior quarterback Dominic Randolph as the Preseason Offensive Player of the Year and Lafayette senior linebacker Mark Leggiero as the Preseason Defensive Player of the Year. Randolph has won two consecutive Offensive Player of the Year honors and was also the preseason choice last year. Leggiero was a First-Team All-Patriot League selection in 2008.

Holy Cross will seek its sixth Patriot League title, and first since 1991, with a veteran team that includes 15 returning starters for sixth-year Head Coach Tom Gilmore. The Crusaders bring back six starters on the offensive side of the ball, with Randolph back at quarterback and already in possession of Patriot League career records for completions and passing touchdowns and nearing the League marks for passing yardage and total offense. He will be aided by the return of four starting offensive linemen, including All-Patriot League picks Aaron Jones and Chris Poole. The Crusaders have nine of their 11 starters back on defense, including Second-Team All-Patriot League returnees Sean Lamkin, Marcus Rodriguez and Michael Wright. Gilmore has led the Crusaders to a 13-5 Patriot League record in the last three seasons, and three straight 7-4 records overall.

Colgate will have to replace 11 starters from last year's Patriot League champion team, including all-time leading rusher Jordan Scott and three First-Team All-Patriot League players on the offensive line. But the Raiders have solid returnees on both sides of the ball, with quarterback Greg Sullivan, running back Nate Eachus and wide receiver Pat Simonds each earning All-Patriot League recognition on offense a year ago. The defense has seven starters back, including All-Patriot League picks Wayne Moten, Austin Douglas, Paul Mancuso and Greg Hadley.

Lafayette and Lehigh are tied for the third spot in the poll, and each have reason to believe they can contend for the 2009 title. The Leopards have 14 starters back for 10th-year Head Coach Frank Tavani, with six on both offense and defense. Three starters are back on the offensive line, including All-Patriot League pick Ryan Hart-Predmore, while Leggiero leads the defense after recording 93 tackles and 12.5 tackles for loss last year. Lehigh has just 10 starters back

and only four on the offensive side of the ball, but does have quarterback J.B. Clark in the fold after a breakout sophomore season and First-Team All-Patriot League pick Will Rackley leading the offensive line. Three of the returning starters on defense were All-Patriot League selections in 2008, with linebacker Matt Cohen and defensive lineman B.J. Benning making the first team and cornerback Jarard Cribbs on the second team.

Fordham fell to 1-5 in the Patriot League last season after winning the title in 2007, but still has a strong core in place to compete in 2009 with 16 starters returning. That group includes fourth-year starting quarterback John Skelton and the Patriot League's leader in rushing yardage in 2008, Xavier Martin, on offense, as well as two-time All-Patriot League returnee James Crockett on defense.

Bucknell takes sixth place in the poll, though the Bison have reason for optimism with 17 starters returning. That includes All-Patriot League picks at running back (A.J. Kizekai) and wide receiver (Shaun Pasternak) to go with quarterback Marcello Trigg among nine starters on the offensive side of the ball, and linebacker Sam Nana-Sinkam among eight returnees on defense. Georgetown rounds out the poll, but has a League-high 19 starters returning. That group includes All-Patriot League defensive back Travis Mack.

Randolph has one more season to add to an already decorated career. He has been named Patriot League Offensive Player of the Year in each of the past two seasons, and was also a finalist for the Walter Payton Award (FCS Most Outstanding Player) in each of the past two years. He completed 340-of-520 passes for 3,838 yards and 34 touchdowns last season, and holds Patriot League records for career completions (821) and passing touchdowns (83). He enters his final year fewer than 150 yards away from both the League's passing yardage and total offense records, and has already been named a preseason Walter Payton Award candidate.

Leggiero helped Lafayette lead the Patriot League in rushing, total and scoring defense. He made 93 tackles and 12.5 tackles for loss to earn First-Team All-Patriot League recognition, and is the League's leading returning tackler. He has been named to the All-Patriot League team in each of the last two seasons.

Six of the seven Patriot League teams open the season on Sept. 5, which includes Georgetown visiting Holy Cross in the League opener. Lehigh and Colgate will host games that day, while Bucknell and Fordham are on the road. Lafayette opens up the next week, as the Leopards begin their season with Patriot League action at Georgetown.

Patriot League Preseason Poll Results

1. Holy Cross (7)	67
2. Colgate (6)	64
3. Lafayette	46
Lehigh (1)	46
5. Fordham	35
6. Bucknell	24
7. Georgetown	12

Patriot League Preseason Offensive Player of the Year: Dominic Randolph, QB, Holy Cross (Sr., 6'3, 223, Amelia, Ohio/St. Xavier)

Patriot League Preseason Defensive Player of the Year: Mark Leggiero, LB, Lafayette (Sr., 5'11, 220, Bohemia, N.Y./ Connetequot)

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