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Hamburg grad headlines season's 1st HEY Awards

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photo courtesy of university of connecticut Hamburg graduate Rayell Heistand advances the ball upfield during a recent University of Connecticut field hockey game. Heistand, a member of the All-Big East preseason team, was named the Big East Defensive Player of the Week after the first week of play.

 Image Gallery for Hamburg grad headlines season's 1st HEY Awards



In lieu of a thought for the day, it's simply nice to be back. Fall collegiate schedules are under way and there is some catching up to do from late summer happenings.

So let's get right to it.

HEY Awards

A Hamburg graduate and a sophomore field hockey player for the Connecticut Huskies earns the first Higher Education Yahoo (HEY) Award.

Rayell Heistand was named to the All-Big East preseason team. The sophomore back quickly showed she deserved the selection by being named Big East Defensive Player of the Week for the first week of play.

UConn, co-champs of the Big East last season, shut out Temple 2-0 and defeated Fairfield 8-1. In addition to her tough defense, Heistand also scored a goal in the Fairfield game.

And that's not all. Heistand was also named to the Big East All-Academic Team and the 2009 National Field Hockey Coaches' Association National Academic Team. She also played for the U.S. 2009 Junior World Cup team. That's quite a resume.

- Last month, Slippery Rock and Marian grad Jen Blasko was named the 2008-09 NCAA Division II Conference Commissioner's Association Atlantic Region Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year.

Blasko, a four-year starter as a hitter for The Rock's volleyball team, graduated from Slippery Rock in May with a perfect 4.0 grade point average as an exercise science major and is now enrolled in Slippery Rock's physical therapy graduate program.

Blasko was also an ESPN the Magazine Academic All-America selection, earned the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference (PSAC) Pete Nevins Scholar-Athlete of the Year award, and was a multiple all-conference and all-region team selection. Say HEY!

- The next HEY award goes to a Pottsville grad and outstanding softball player who is being inducted into the Bucknell Athletics Hall of Fame on homecoming weekend, Oct. 24.

Jennifer Yuengling Franquet, Bucknell Class of 1993, is considered one of the best catchers and leadoff hitters who ever played for the Bison. She started 144 of a possible 145 games and led the Bison to four straight 20-win seasons. She had a career .332 batting average (batting .397 in her senior season), ninth best all-time, broke school records in career walks, longest hitting streak (20 games) and is second all-time in stolen bases (67). In her junior and senior years she was a perfect 37-for-37 in stolen-base attempts. She also ranks second in runs (111) and fifth in hits (163).

Yuengling Franquet, who is part of the family-owned Yuengling Brewery management team, was twice named all-conference and was selected for the Patriot League All-Decade Team. She's also a member of the Pottsville High All-Sports Hall of Fame.

- Two Blue Mountain graduates received post-season honors at Kutztown University.

Former football defensive back Cory Porrino, now a Kutztown graduate, received the football team's MVP Award. In his senior season, Porrino had 64 tackles, including eight for loss, and a sack, two interceptions, a fumble recovery and three deflected passes.

Junior second baseman Mike Kacelowicz received the Coach's Award for baseball. Kacelowicz batted .355 last season with an on-base percentage of .466, a team-high 14 stolen bases, 15 doubles, three home runs, 39 runs scored and 29 RBIs. He also received a Rawlings gold glove. His coach also praised his leadership and attitude.

- A final HEY award goes to Lebanon Valley College volleyball teammates junior Joelle Snyder of Marian and sophomore Angela Kuperavage of Nativity. The duo led LVC to the title at the SUNY-Cortland Red Dragon Tournament this weekend.

After being down 2-0 in the title match, Kuperavage's 18 digs and Snyder's 19 kills brought their team back for a 3-2 win. Snyder, who had 18 kills in a second-round game, was named to the All-Tournament Team. Kuperavage also had 17 digs in the semifinal game, and could easily have been an all-tournament selection as well.

By the Numbers

Let's run down some early season outstanding performances by local student-athletes:

- Pottsville's Brent Clauser and Marian's Brian and Pat Filanowski helped the DeSales University men's cross country place second at Friday's five-team Lehigh Valley Championships at Lehigh University, including a victory over Division I Lafayette College.

Clauser finished the 6K course 16th overall in 19:52.3, while Brian Filanowski was 22nd in 20:03.6 and Pat Filanowski was 40th in 20:35.1.

- Lebanon Valley wide receiver Joe Brennan of Nativity had five catches for 114 yards and two touchdowns - including a 70-yarder - in the Dutchmen's 47-42 season-opening win over Gettysburg.

- Lebanon Valley freshman soccer forward Nikki Snyder of Tri-Valley scored her first collegiate goal in LVC's 2-2 tie with Drew in the Cyclone Classic.

- Bloomsburg freshman cross country runner Vicki Davis of Schuylkill Haven finished fifth to help the Huskies to a 23-36 win over Susquehanna.

- Bucknell junior cross country runner Alexa Griffiths of Tamaqua ran 12th to help the Bison to a team win in the Harry Lang Invitational.

- Shippensburg starting strong safety junior Nick Melusky of Minersville had two tackles and an interception to set up a score in a 34-23 loss to Shepherd, and then had five tackles and a fumble recovery in Ship's 24-14 upset win over Edinboro.

- Susquehanna wide receiver J. J. Moran of Pottsville had three catches for 27 yards in a 24-0 win over Moravian. He's also the Crusaders' top punt and kickoff return specialist.

- Schuylkill Haven's Andrew Fink starts at cornerback for Dickinson, and had eight tackles and an interception in a 52-47 victory over Grove City College on Saturday.

- Bloomsburg, off to a 2-0 start on the gridiron with wins over two ranked teams, is ranked sixth nationally in Division II. Local student-athletes are playing major roles in the Huskies success. In Saturday's 17-10 win over 17th-ranked California (Pa.), first-team All-PSAC East placekicker Jon Koenig of Pine Grove matched a career long when he kicked a 42-yard field goal. Koenig also kicked a 28-yard field goal that proved to be the winning points in the Huskies' season-opening win over Ashland.

Safety Alex Landis of Pine Grove had an interception and seven tackles against California, after forcing a fumble and making four tackles against Ashland. Linebacker Thomas McFarland of Pottsville had six tackles and two pass breakups in the Ashland game.

- Susquehanna sophomore soccer midfielder Samantha Price of Minersville racked up an assist in a 2-2 tie with Lycoming, where North Schuylkill grad Kaitlin Horn plays forward and midfield for the Warriors.

Enjoy your Labor Day holiday.

(MacLaughlin's college column appears bi-weekly. To make contributions, e-mail Sports Editor Leroy Boyer at Lboyer@republicanherald.com)