

Wednesday, May 3, 2007

MEET MEN'S LACROSSE TRI-CAPTAIN AND LEADING SCORER MARK WARNER

MEDFORD -- The Tufts University men's lacrosse team will host the 2007 New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) tournament semi-finals and championship game at Bello Field this weekend. The games promise to be very competitive, with two national top 10 teams (Wesleyan, Tufts), the six-time defending conference champion (Middlebury) and an upstart team (Williams) that has defeated two of the other three teams in the tournament on hand.

Senior tri-captain **Mark Warner (Wading River, NY/Shoreham Wading River HS)** and the Tufts Jumbos earned the right to host the NESCAC Championship by finishing the regular-season with an 8-1 record. Warner scored two goals with three assists when Tufts earned a crucial 11-9 win at Amherst in the last week of the season. The Jumbos then beat Middlebury for the first time in 40 years, 7-6 in overtime, on Saturday to clinch first place in the league.



From the lacrosse hotbed of Long Island, Warner leads the Jumbos in scoring with 19 goals and 25 assists for 44 points. He is second on the program's all-time assists list with 91. He's played on four good Tufts teams that have accumulated a 46-15 record since 2004, including this year's 12-2 mark and #7 national ranking. In Focus got in touch with Mark recently to learn more about this year's team and about one of the top offensive players in the conference.

[This year's team is the first in the program's history to win a NESCAC regular-season title. You've been on four good teams here, but what are the factors that have resulted in this particular team's success?](#)

MW -- The most important factor to this team's success is senior leadership. The seniors are a tight-knit group that has been focused on doing whatever it takes to win. They have provided an excellent example of hard work and unselfishness, which has trickled down to the younger players.

Along with winning the NESCAC regular-season title, Tufts finally beat Middlebury. No one on the team, coaches included, had been born yet the last time a Tufts lacrosse team defeated Middlebury in 1967. Beyond earning the title with that win, what is the significance to it?

MW -- In my career at Tufts we had previously lost to Middlebury by one goal twice. Losing by such a small margin in the past has intensified my desire to beat Middlebury before the end of my career. Avenging these losses was great, but the sweetest thing about this victory was winning the NESCAC title and earning the top seed in the playoffs. Beyond these achievements, this win did not carry any extra significance.

Almost all of the team's NESCAC games were closely contested. What has been key to the team winning close games?

MW -- The key to winning these games has been our offensive balance and a stingy defense. Our team has so many offensive threats that our opponents can not just guard against one person. Each and every game we have a new hero who steps up and gets the deciding goal. Also, our defense buckles down and plays their best when a game gets tight. In many cases they give our offense chances to win.

You've racked up a lot of assists playing with goal scorers like Bryan Griffin, Devin Clarke and Clem McNally at Tufts. In fact, your 91 assists are second all-time in program history. You've scored a career-high 19 goals this season. How do you see your role within the team's total offensive concept?

MW -- Ever since I started playing lacrosse, the strength of my game has been my vision and ability to find open players. Thus, one of my most important roles in our offense is setting up teammates to score goals. Luckily I have had some great players to set up, which has allowed me to rack up assists.

What drew you to Tufts out of Shoreham Wading River HS, both from a lacrosse and non-athletic standpoint?

MW -- The outstanding academic reputation of Tufts is what initially drew me here, but I truly fell in love with Tufts on the library roof. While looking at the wonderful view of Boston, I realized the location of Tufts would be able to offer wonderful experiences both on and off campus. From an athletic standpoint, the major draw to Tufts was the fact that Tufts competed in the NESCAC. Coming into school I knew I wanted to play in a highly competitive conference, which the NESCAC is.