

SU QB honored

*Rams' Brett Zirkle
receives academic
recognition by NFF*

By JEB INGE
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

DALLAS — Shepherd University quarterback Brett Zirkle gained national recognition this week not just as a football player but as a national honor student who played on the gridiron.

Zirkle was awarded seating in the 2010 class of the National Football Foundation & College Hall of Fame Hampshire Honor Society.

"It truly is an honor. When you put a lot of hard work into something it is always nice to receive recognition for it," Zirkle said.

As quarterback for Shepherd from 2006 to 2010, Zirkle was just as effective in the classroom as he was on the turf. Because of his hard work in the classroom as a



ZIRKLE

scholastic athlete, Zirkle will receive an \$18,000 post-graduate scholarship.

Zirkle doesn't take all the credit for the achievement saying, "Of course I've had a lot of help and support along the way for which I'm extremely grateful."

A total of 620 players from 246 schools qualified for the award — now in its fourth year. The honor society, which pulls football players from all divisions, requires each recipient maintain a 3.2 GPA or better throughout their college career. Aside from meeting NCAA requirements, the player must also be a starter or a substantial substitute on their college team.

A relatively new award, the honor society is part of the NFF's efforts towards the promotion of academic achievement facilitated through athletic success.

"The NFF's mission is to build leaders through football, and this year's Hampshire Honor Society members are living proof of that charge," NFF Chairman Archie Manning said.

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The NFF Scholar-Athlete Award program has awarded over \$9 million to 724 scholars and community members. Over \$300,000 is distributed nationally to 15 individuals.

"Each of these young men has showcased a strong desire to succeed on and off the football field" said Manning, who views the winners of the award as the "next generation of our nation's leaders."

"When the recognition comes from the NFF, it's a nice feeling."

— Brett Zirkle
Shepherd football player

In addition to the scholarships distributed to the 15 recipients, one individual is

chosen as the winner of the Campbell Trophy. The winner, such as former Florida quarterback and 2010 NFL first-round draft pick Tim Tebow, who won in 2009, will receive a total scholarship of \$25,000.

Zirkle sees the honor as especially important

"When the recognition comes from the NFF, it's a nice feeling," he said.

Rams earn regional bid

No. 6 Shepherd will face third-seeded Kutztown on Friday

By BEN GIBSON
FOR THE JOURNAL

SHEPHERDSTOWN — Class may be out at Shepherd University, but the softball season isn't for the Rams' softball team, as it recently earned a bid into the NCAA Division II Atlantic Regional Tournament.

The sixth-seeded Rams will face off against the third-seeded Kutztown University Golden Bears at 2:30 p.m. Friday at California University of Pennsylvania at Lilly Field.

"I believe we will do well at regionals. I have very high expectations for this team and expect nothing but success for the regionals," said Shepherd shortstop Courtney Williams, who was tied for

the team lead with five home runs.

The Rams will be up against a Golden Bear team that is ranked 20th nationally by the National Fast Pitch Coaches Association.

Despite being a slight underdog, the Rams are confident.

"I think it can be looked at as more of an advantage. It has been a big motivator for us and has changed the level of intensity in our practices. Many people may expect us to lose, but in our minds we believe that we have the talent to come out on top," Williams said.

"Where the doubt in us from the other teams may be present, it does not have an impact on our capabilities."

Shepherd put together a 35-14 season, going 18-6 in the West Virginia



Conference, but was eliminated in the conference tournament.

"I think being the underdog is the best. No one will expect us to come out and give them a good game," Shepherd's Tricia Bettura said.

Bettura posted a 1.26 earned run average, gaining a 19-7 record on the

year and limiting opposing batters to a .186 batting average.

The Rams aren't the only WVC team, as seventh seeded Fairmont State will face California (Pa.), the two seed.

WVC champion West Virginia Wesleyan, which the Rams split a regular season doubleheader, are the four seed and will be facing No. 5 Indiana (Pa.), which beat the Rams in a doubleheader.

"I expect us to pull together and play hard to prove that we deserve a spot in the regional," said shortstop Chelsie Oals, who hit .301, knocking in 18 runs this year.

Shepherd may be a slight underdog, but they don't plan on making it easy for their opponents in the tournament.

SU softball gets berth in Atlantic Region

Even though it was eliminated early in the WVIAC softball tournament, Shepherd has received an at-large bid to one of the two Atlantic Regional tournaments.

In the split four-team regional that Shepherd was extended a bid to will be hosted by California of Pennsylvania.

Shepherd was 1-2 in the WVIAC tournament to show a 35-14 overall record. Top-seeded Kutztown enters the double elimination tournament at California with a 41-16 overall record, while Fairmont is 31-17 and the host Vulcans are 34-12.

California is ranked 15th nationally. Kutztown is ranked 20th nationally. Neither Shepherd nor Fairmont has a national ranking, but the Lady Rams are the sixth-ranked team in the Atlantic Region.

The other four-team Atlantic Region event is being hosted by Bloomsburg (Pa.) on the same dates.

The first-round game concerning Shepherd is on Friday, May 14, when the Lady Rams play Kutztown at 2:30 p.m. . . . after host California faces Fairmont at 12 noon.

The two winners of the split Atlantic Region will square off in a best-of-three series to determine the entrant to the eight-team NCAA Division softball World Series to be played in St. Joseph's, Missouri from May 27-31.

SU football golf tourney

The Shepherd football team will be holding the Rams Golf Tournament at the Locust Hill Golf Course in Charles Town on Saturday, June 12. The day will include golf, golf carts, prizes, a gift pack, and a BBQ dinner. All proceeds from the outing directly benefit the Shepherd football program.

For more information contact SU assistant football coach Josh Kline at jkline@shepherd.edu or call (304) 671-7712.