

VERIZON ACADEMIC ALL-AMERICA TEAM

S E L E C T E D B Y C O S I D A

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FLORIDA'S MATT BONNER NAMED AS A TWO-TIME VERIZON

ACADEMIC ALL-AMERICA TEAM MEMBER OF THE YEAR FOR MEN'S BASKETBALL

STAMFORD, Conn., March 6, 2003 – Florida Gator power forward, Matt Bonner, was named the 2002-2003 Verizon Academic All-America Team Member of the Year for men's basketball as released today by Verizon and CoSIDA.

A two-time Verizon Academic All-America, Bonner leads his team in points scored and surpassed 1,400 points this year. He is just the second Gator in school history to be named twice as Academic All-America Team Member of the Year. At 6-10", Bonner leads the #3-ranked Gators in points and field goals and is ranked 11th on the university's career three pointer chart.

"It is an honor to receive this award," said Matt Bonner. "I came to college to excel in both basketball and in the classroom. This award is a product of hard work in both areas. I've always taken a great deal of pride in my academics and to be able to achieve something like this is truly special."

University of Florida's head coach, Billy Donovan, agrees. "I'm very, very happy for Matt. He has demonstrated the highest commitment both academically and athletically and this reward reflects his hard work. I know it's an award that he takes a great deal of pride in with the amount of effort he has put forth both academically and athletically."

Connecticut's Emeka Okafor was also named to the first team. As a sophomore, Okafor was the only underclassman named to the Verizon Academic All-America men's basketball first team. He leads the Huskies in rebounds and set a school record for blocked shots.

Also a Huskie, J.T. Luginski of Michigan Tech was named Academic All-America Team Member of the Year in the college division. Luginski, a three-time Academic All-America, has scored over 1,500 career points for his team, which is currently ranked #3 in the country for Division II schools by the National Association of Basketball Coaches.

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University of Nebraska-Kearney players, Nick Branting and Nick Svehla, were both named to the second team in the college division. Branting and Svehla, both forwards for the Lopers, recently led their team to their second RMAC title.

The complete list of student-athletes named to the Verizon Academic All-America Men's Basketball Team is attached (See Attachment A).

The Verizon Academic All-America Teams program recognizes student-athletes who have succeeded on the field and in the classroom. Individuals are selected by votes from CoSIDA, the 1,800-member College Sports Information Directors of America. To be eligible, an athlete must be a varsity starter or key reserve and maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.20 on a scale of 4.00. Since the program's inception in 1952, over 12,000 student-athletes have been honored with the award.

Under an agreement with CoSIDA, Verizon has been the exclusive sponsor of the Academic All-America program since 1985. Verizon, America's literacy champion, strongly believes that literacy is a key ingredient to success and outstanding achievements in life. The Academic All-America program is part of Verizon Reads, the company's national campaign to promote literacy through corporate philanthropy, partner collaboration, community outreach, and customer and employee participation.

For more information about Verizon, visit www.verizon.com.

For more information about the Academic All-America programs, visit www.cosida.com or email academicallamerica@millsport.com.

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