



NEWS FROM THE NEW ENGLAND HOCKEY WRITERS ASSOCIATION

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New England Hockey Writers Recognize Three With Joe Tomasello Unsung Hero Awards Laura Anderson of Yale, Jillian Flynn of Maine and Stefanos Lekkas of Vermont Honored Annual Dinner Cancelled — Parker-York Award Will Not Be Presented

Three college hockey players who made unique contributions to their school's programs have been recognized with the 2020 Joe Tomasello Award, it was announced today by the New England Hockey Writers Association. The award, named after the longtime manager of the Boston Arena (now Northeastern University's Matthews Arena) is normally given out to a single honoree. With this year's announcement, the NEHWA will give multiple awards annually. This year's recipients are all seniors: Yale Forward **Laura Anderson**, Maine Goalie **Jillian Flynn**, and Vermont Goalie **Stefanos Lekkas**.

"In our experience, every team has an unsung hero," said NEHWA Director Joe Bertagna. "We just felt it was time to expand the number of recipients for this award. And even with three, we are leaving out some very strong nominees."

Due to the Covid-19 virus, the annual dinner has been cancelled. (All honorees will be sent their awards.) In addition to these N.E. Hockey Writers awards, presented by gender and division, the annual N.E. Hockey Writers' Dinner has featured presentation of the Gridiron Club of Boston's Walter Brown and Joe Concannon awards, the J. Thom Lawler Award given by the Eastern Massachusetts Chapter of the National Ice Hockey Officials Association and a number of other individual awards.

It was also announced that the prestigious Parker-York Award for Contribution to Amateur Hockey in New England will not be given out this year.

2019-20 New England Hockey Writers Association Joe Tomasello Unsung Hero Award Winners

Laura Anderson, SR Forward, Yale University: Yale's first-year coach Mark Bolding submitted the following on behalf of Laura Anderson, a native of Lino Lakes, Minnesota. *"Laura had a big role this year as our sole team captain (a Yale tradition for to have only one "C" voted by her teammates) and she took it on with the superb quality, leadership and energy that her Yale team would need with an entirely new coaching staff on board for the start of her senior year. After several injuries the year prior, Anderson fought her way early in the 19-20 season onto the necessary and much needed third line for Yale. Anderson anchored this group of senior line mates with her hard working, nose down, grinding manner — giving us a consistent and steady trio to with which to compete in our tough ECAC conference.*

She took care of the locker room and improved the off-ice culture for the team, while making sure everyone was approaching each game and weekend series with a winning attitude and mindset that would eventually reinsert Yale into the ECAC playoffs (after only winning 8 games the previous year.) Anderson drove the focus and effort each month with the Bulldogs and it paid off as they, not only made the playoffs, they secured a 5th place finish in the ECAC - the team's highest finish in many years. Yale entered the playoffs on the road at our rival Harvard for a best of three series. After a disappointing 4-0 loss in Game 1 of the ECAC Quarterfinals, I challenged Anderson to lead us to be better and get the team ready to compete for Game 2. And she did just that as Anderson and her teammates responded with a 4-3 win in OT to force Game 3.

Although we lost an epic Game 3 to Harvard in triple OT, Anderson drove this group to earn Yale's most conference and most overall wins in the program's 40 year history of women's hockey. Anderson played each and every shift for Yale as a true leader and inspiration to her teammates and she truly epitomizes what a "grinding - role player" is all about in college hockey. While her stats this year are far from impressive - her ability to lead, motivate and support her team makes her more valuable and, worthy of the prestigious Joe Tomasello Unsung Hero Award."

Jillian Flynn, SR Goaltender, University of Maine: Flynn, a four-year back-up goaltender for the Black Bears squad, did not play a single minute this season, her senior year. Her career totals: four games, 76 minutes, .947 save percentage and a 0.78 goals allowed average. A native of Presque Isle, Maine, Flynn stole the show at this year's Hockey East Tournament banquet, providing her observations as a back-up and pointing out with a smile how her stats were better than all the starters she backed up.

Said the coaching staff aboy Flynn: *"She is the most remarkable person or player you will coach. She has impacted the state of Maine with her generosity and heart. You saw her infectious humor at the 2020 Women's Hockey East Banquet. With her humor aside, Jillian is a pre-med 4.0 GPA student and on the leadership group for Student Athlete Academic Center. She scheduled tutor times every single week for three years with players on our team and with other students. It didn't matter if it was a road trip and you got in at 1:00 a.m. If your time with*

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Jillian Flynn, Maine (continued)

her on the team was at 8:00 a.m., you went. She had an impact on all the boys and girl youth and high school hockey programs in Maine. She has become a role model for the entire state of Maine in what a hockey player and person should be. She was voted captain with 100% of the team voting for her... as a third string goalie. She helped change an entire hockey culture in four years and was the leading reason why Maine Women's hockey has been to the Hockey East semifinals in two of the last three years. As a leader she strived to be a better person and hockey player. Every week for two years she met with the staff and other member of the leadership team to be better. On the ice, she had goalie sessions at 7:00 a.m., followed by video at 7:45. This was for two years and she never missed a minute. Jillian is a compassionate teammate, student, and person. This is why she will succeed being a Physician's Assistant, wife, and person."

Stefanos Lekkas, SR Goaltender, University of Vermont: Lekkas will graduate in May after one of the most impressive goaltending careers in UVM program history. Lekkas finished his collegiate career with 3,913 saves, the most in Hockey East history, second-most in UVM history, and fifth-most in NCAA history. In program history, Lekkas is the program's all-time save percentage leader (.918) and ranks second in games played (134), third in goals against average (2.61), fourth in wins (45), and fourth in shutouts (7).

In his career, despite these records, the Elburn, Illinois, native was voted a Second Team All-Star once and received no other Hockey East post-season recognition. This past season showed how courageously he played in goal for the Catamounts. Lekkas allowed two goals or fewer in 14 games this year yet the UVM record in those games was just 4-6-4, as UVM averaged only 1.4 goals per game in those contests. He allowed three or fewer goals in a total of 22 games and the team record was 4-13-5.

Said UVM head coach Kevin Sneddon about Lekkas, "*Stef was both a hero and unsung hero during his time at UVM. He received accolades at one point when the team was successful yet was a quiet, unsung hero the past two years. Throughout his career, his loyalty, his dedication to his position, his love for his teammates and coaches, and his true acceptance of being unrecognized for excellence makes him one of the best players I have had the chance to coach in 27 years.*"

2019-20 Joe Tomasello Unsung Hero "Honorable Mention"

- Arianna Boscia, SR Defense, St. Michael's College (Cranston, RI)
- Paige Capistran, SR Defense, Northeastern University (Manchester, NH)
 - Zach Giuttari, SR Defense, Brown University (Warwick, RI)
- Meghara McManus, SR Forward, University of New Hampshire (Milton, MA)
 - Emily Yue, SR Goaltender, Harvard University (Guilford, CT)

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