



Hockey Commissioners Association

For Immediate Release:
Friday, April 11, 2014

Contacts:
Laura Reed, University of Maine, (207) 581-3646
laura.reed@maine.edu
Joe Bertagna, Hockey East, (781) 245-2122
jbertagna@hockeyeastonline.com

MAINE'S BRICE O'CONNOR NAMED RECIPIENT OF DEREK HINES UNSUNG HERO AWARD

PHILADELPHIA – University of Maine men's hockey senior defenseman Brice O'Connor (Londonderry, N.H.) was named the 2014 Derek Hines Unsung Hero Award Winner, as announced by the Hockey Commissioner's Association (HCA) in Philadelphia, Pa. The award was established by the HCA in honor of former Army player Derek Hines, who was a "consummate team player and team builder." Hines played at Army from 1999-2003 and was a four-year letter-winner as well as a co-captain his senior season. He was killed in the line of duty on Sept. 1, 2005 in Afghanistan.

O'Connor captained the Black Bears during the 2013-14 season, helping Maine to a sixth-place finish in Hockey East under first-year Head Coach Red Gendron. O'Connor served as a liaison between the team and university athletic administrators during the program's first coaching change since 2001, and his teammates voted him captain prior to the start of the season.

"In 34 years of coaching at virtually every level of our game, I've seen one or two captains as good as Brice but none better," Gendron said. "He holds himself daily to the highest possible standards and holds his teammates accountable to do the same. He models the right behaviors and he is vocal in getting his teammates to adhere to those same high standards."

During his freshman season in 2010-11, O'Connor dressed in 13 of Maine's 36 games, recording three assists. By the time the 2013-14 season began, he found himself on the Black Bears' top defense pairing and among the team's leading penalty killers. He finished his collegiate career with five goals and 20 assists for 25 points in 104 games.

"His fitness, strength, and competitiveness are as high as they can possibly be," said Gendron. "If not for his willingness to work and to compete, he would not be able to play successfully at this level. No one on our team has worked harder to improve what skill they have than Brice O'Connor has."

O'Connor, a finance major with a minor in innovation engineering, is a three-time Maine Scholar-Athlete Award winner, a three-time Hockey East All-Academic Team selection, and a finalist for this year's Dean Smith Award, presented annually to the top scholar-athlete at the University of Maine. He served as Treasurer of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, and was involved in the community as well, visiting children in the hospital and helping to install a new basketball court at the local YMCA.

The Hockey Commissioners Association coordinates the honor. Each of the six hockey conferences nominates a player to a national ballot. From there, sports information directors from each conference vote on a winner, "who displays exemplary sportsmanship, is supremely competitive, intelligent and extraordinarily conditioned with an unmatched work ethic. The contributions of this individual, on and off the ice, cannot be measured by statistics alone."

2014 Derek Hines Unsung Hero Award Finalists

Kevin Ryan, Sr. F, Niagara (AHA)

David Glen, So. F, Penn State (Big Ten)

Cole Bardreau, Jr. F, Cornell (ECACH)

Adam Krause, Jr. F, Minn.-Duluth (NCHC)

Matt Bruneteau, Sr. D, Lake Superior
(WCHA)



*Bob DeGregorio, Atlantic Hockey • Jim Delany, Big Ten
Steve Hagwell, ECAC Hockey • Joe Bertagna, Hockey East
Josh Fenton, NCHC • Bruce McLeod, WCHA*