



GREATER RALEIGH SPORTS COUNCIL

NEWS RELEASE

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Evening of Champions Honors Triangle's Best

More than 400 sports enthusiasts gathered at the Feb. 7 Greater Raleigh Sports Council Evening of Champions, presented by SunTrust in partnership with 850 the Buzz and 620 the Bull, to honor the Triangle's best athletes, coaches and advocates for athletics.

"We would like to congratulate all of the evening's award winners and finalists, as well as those who were nominated," said Greater Raleigh Sports Council chair Rick French of Raleigh public relations firm French/West/Vaughan.

"We're very proud of all of the deserving nominees and award winners for their achievements and commitment to excellence during 2007," he said.

The evening celebrated 20 of the Top Triangle Sports Moments of 2007—with the top moment occurring March 3, 2007, when Kay Yow and the N.C. State women's basketball team upset No. 1 ranked and undefeated Duke in the ACC tournament. The team went on to make an emotional run to the NCAA Sweet 16. Coach Yow capped off the season by winning the inaugural Jimmy V ESPY Award for Perseverance.

In addition, the following individual awards were presented at the event:

Progress Energy Lifetime Achievement Award—Ron Francis, Carolina Hurricanes

Following a career in which he established himself as the greatest player in Carolina Hurricanes franchise history, Ron Francis re-joined the organization in November 2006 as the team's director of player development. He was named assistant general manager in October 2007, further enhancing his role in hockey personnel decisions for the team. In November 2007, he was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame.

Capitol Broadcasting Company Sports Person of 2007 Award—Josh Hamilton, Texas Rangers

A Raleigh native and 1999 graduate of Athens Drive High School, Josh Hamilton will start the 2008 season with the Texas Rangers. During his high school career, he was a two-time winner of the North Carolina Gatorade High School "Player of the Year" Award, and set a high school record of 13 homers in one season his senior year. After his senior year, *USA Baseball* named him "Amateur Player of the Year," and *Baseball America* named him "High School Player of the Year."

TLC Laser Eye Centers Amateur Athletics Award—Jerry Winterton, Cary High School

Jerry Winterton is no average high school wrestling coach. In 2007 he was voted "National High School Coach of the Year" by the National High School Coaches Association. Recently, Winterton became the first coach to win his 150th individual tournament.

RSM McGladrey, Inc. Courage/Character Award—Tucker Dupree, U.S. Paralympic Hopeful

Tucker Dupree is a swimmer who, in October 2006, began losing his vision due to a rare disease called Lebers hereditary optic neuropathy. This didn't derail his passion for swimming. He was Garner Magnet High School's team captain his senior year and broke two school records. Dupree is currently training for the U.S. Paralympic Trials in swimming to be held in April 2008. His goal is to make the U.S. Paralympic Team and travel to Beijing, China.

Central Carolina Hockey Community Spirit Award—SAS, Cary

SAS has a philosophy of giving back to the community and has had a huge impact on local sports over the past several years—donating both time and money to different programs, events and organizations around the Triangle. They sponsor the SAS Championship, the proceeds of which support the Triangle Community Foundation and Communities in Schools of Wake County.

John Freehafer Sports Volunteer of 2007 Award—Andy Hnat, Raleigh Junior Rowing

Andy Hnat is coach of the Raleigh Junior Rowing team, founded in 2001. Over the past seven seasons, he has handled all of the coaching duties, including finding and maintaining equipment for the athletes. He handles most of the administration as well, including recruiting and fundraising.

CARQUEST Female Scholar Athlete of the Year—Sarah Cox, Middle Creek High School, Apex

Sarah Cox is a senior at Middle Creek High School where she participates in tennis and basketball. During the 2007 tennis season, she was named the 4-A Mideast Regional Singles Tournament Champion. She has been a Tri-8 Conference player of the year two years in a row, captain for the past two years, All-Conference for four years, All-Region since 2006, All-State during her senior season, and Academic All-Conference for all four years.

CARQUEST Male Scholar Athlete of the Year—Matthew Duncan, Charles E. Jordan Senior High School, Durham

Matthew Duncan is a senior at Charles E. Jordan Senior High School where he participates in baseball. He was elected to the Piedmont Athletic Conference All-Conference Baseball team and voted "Most Improved Player" by teammates for the 2007 season.

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About the Greater Raleigh Sports Council

Created in 1998, the Greater Raleigh Sports Council works to foster a healthy economic environment by promoting the region as a leading site for sporting events involving youth, collegiate, amateur and professional sports competitions.

About the Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce

The Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce is the Triangle's largest non-profit business membership organization made up of more than 2,700 member firms representing 70 percent of the private sector employment in Wake County. The Chamber has represented the interests of the local business community since 1888.