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#PollWeek: Terrier 3-Peat? St. Francis Brooklyn Is Unanimous Men's Soccer Pick

Somerset, NJ -- St. Francis Brooklyn men's soccer extended its dominant Northeast Conference (NEC) run a year ago, taking home its second straight crown and fourth in the last five seasons. Fast forward nine months and the Terriers have been unanimously chosen by the league's head coaches to repeat in 2018. Borough rival LIU Brooklyn was picked second in the preseason poll.

Fairleigh Dickinson was picked third and Saint Francis U was chosen fourth, while Central Connecticut was voted fifth. Robert Morris, Bryant, Mount St. Mary's and Sacred Heart rounded out the nine-team field.

Last season, the Terriers finished league play with a 6-0-1 record for the second-straight year and racked up 14 wins overall, the program's fifth consecutive season with double-digit wins. SFC boasted a suffocating defense, allowing just two goals in NEC play for the year.

St. Francis Brooklyn, under the guidance of the 2017 NEC Coaching Staff of the Year led by 12th year head coach Tom Giovatto, returns senior forward and 2017 NEC Tournament MVP **Ali Tounkara (Aulnay, France/Lyceé Voillaume)**. Tounkara ranked amongst the top-25 nationally in game-winning goals (4) and fourth in the NEC in goals (8) and points (18). He tied the NEC Tournament record with four goals in two matches. Junior forward **Matteo Caribotti (Massa, Italy/Liceo Scientifico E. Fermi)** (3 goals, 7 points) and senior midfielder **Sami Gliguem (Nanterre, Paris/Paris X Nanterre University)** (4 goals, 10 points) both earned NEC All-Rookie recognition last year.

LIU Brooklyn won the NEC title in 2015 and has qualified for the NEC tournament four years running under longtime head coach TJ Kostecky. Reigning NEC Player of the Year and three-time first team honoree Rasmus Hansen (Greve, Denmark/Bronby Gymnasium) returns for his senior year after he finished the 2017 campaign ranked third in the league in goals (9) and second in total points (22). Senior defender **Filip Nordström (Stockholm, Sweden/Solna Gymnasium)** was a first-team All-NEC performer last season who provided some offensive punch with seven assists, good for second amongst NEC leaders.

Fairleigh Dickinson qualified for the NEC Tournament last season for the first time since winning it all in 2012. Two wins shy of 200 for his FDU career, Seth Roland has strong one-two punch returning in redshirt senior striker **Ahu Obhakhon (Drogheda, Ireland/St. Joseph CBS)** and sophomore forward **Jacob Labovitz (Great Falls, VA/Langley)**. Obhakan, the NEC Scholar-Athlete of the Year in men's soccer and a third team Academic All-American, was named to the All-NEC first team after he led

2018 NEC Men's Soccer Preseason Coaches Poll

1. St. Francis Brooklyn (8)
2. LIU Brooklyn
3. Fairleigh Dickinson
4. Saint Francis U
5. Central Connecticut
6. Robert Morris
7. Bryant
8. Mount St. Mary's
9. Sacred Heart

First place votes in parentheses

(#PollWeek: Terrier 3-Peat? St. Francis Brooklyn Is Unanimous Men's Soccer Pick • Page 1-of-2)

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Bryant University • Central Connecticut State University • Fairleigh Dickinson University • LIU Brooklyn
Mount St. Mary's University • Robert Morris University • Sacred Heart University
St. Francis Brooklyn • Saint Francis University • Wagner College

the Knights with 16 points. He scored seven times to share team-high honors with Labovitz, the NEC Rookie of the Year who finished with 15 points.

Saint Francis U has reached the NEC title match in four of the last six years but is still gunning for that elusive first NEC crown. Under the guidance of first year head coach Frank Olszewski, the Red Flash return first team All-NEC forward **Mario Mastrangelo (Venetia, PA/Peters Township)** and All-Rookie midfielder **Lucas Rosa (Atibaia, Brazil/COC Atibaia)**. Mastrangelo led the NEC with 13 goals and 26 points in 2017. He ranked 12th nationally in goals and led a Red Flash attack that finished eighth nationally in scoring offense (2.11 gpg). Rosa wrapped his rookie season ranked third on SFU in goals (4) and points (11).

The 2018 NEC Men's Soccer Championship will be contested at the home of the highest seed on November 9 & 11 and will air live on NEC Front Row.

NEC-toids

St. Francis Brooklyn won its eighth NEC title overall last season, tying the Terriers with Fairleigh Dickinson for the most men's soccer titles in league history.

Saint Francis U has a streak of seven consecutive winning seasons in league play broken last year.

LIU Brooklyn has produced the last two NEC Player of the Year honorees - Simen Hestnes (2016) and Rasmus Hansen (2017).

CCSU brings back two-time NEC all-star **Louis Beddouri (Bordeaux, France/Lyce Lauga Bayonne)**, a senior forward.

About The Northeast Conference

Now in its 38th year, the Northeast Conference is an NCAA Division I collegiate athletic association consisting of 10 institutions of higher learning located throughout six states. Media coverage of the NEC extends to four of the largest markets in the United States - New York (#1), Pittsburgh (#22), Baltimore (#26), and Hartford/New Haven (#30). Founded in 1981 as the basketball-only ECAC Metro Conference, the NEC has grown to sponsor 22 championship sports for men and women and now enjoys automatic access to 14 different NCAA Championships. NEC member institutions include Bryant, Central Connecticut, Fairleigh Dickinson, LIU Brooklyn, Mount St. Mary's, Robert Morris, Sacred Heart, St. Francis Brooklyn, Saint Francis U and Wagner. For more information on the NEC, visit the league's official website (www.northeastconference.org) and digital network (www.necfrontrow.com), or follow the league on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat, all @NECsports.