

## NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Bryan Schrepel 913-758-6165  
E-mail: [schrepelb@stmary.edu](mailto:schrepelb@stmary.edu)



## USM Honored for Athletic Character

*NAIA names Saint Mary a Champions of Character Institution for 2003-2004*

(Leavenworth, Kan.)— The University of Saint Mary strives to build strength, integrity and character in all its students. Recognizing the university's mission in action, the NAIA took notice, honoring the character of the University of Saint Mary's student athletes.

The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), in conjunction with the NAIA Character Committee named the University of Saint Mary a *Champions of Character* institution in November. The NAIA awards the *Champions of Character* distinction to collegiate institutions that uphold five tenets during athletic competition: integrity, respect, responsibility, sportsmanship and servant leadership. This is the first year the University of Saint Mary has received such a distinction. USM is one of just 188 schools nation wide that were honored by the NAIA.

"This is a tremendous honor for the university," Athletic Director Darrell Phipps said. "We strive to provide a solid foundation for the future of our student-athletes. To be recognized like this means we are accomplishing our mission."

"Being a *Champion of Character* Institutional Award winner means that you take the time to intentionally practice what the NAIA and the institutional mission statement look like in action," said Rob Miller, NAIA Director of Champions of Character Initiatives. "We are proud of our member institutions that take honor in this award and understand the importance we place on it."

The *Champions of Character* was created by the NAIA three years ago to create an environment in which every student-athlete, coach, official and spectator is committed to the true spirit of competition through the five tenets. The University of Saint Mary is a NAIA Division II member offering eight varsity sports programs. Approximately 55 percent of the Saint Mary student body population competes in collegiate athletics.

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