

NEWS RELEASE

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USM Defensive Stand-Out Named National Player of the Week



(Leavenworth, Kan.)—After just one week into the 2006 season, one member of the University of Saint Mary Spires Football team has made team history and achieved national accolades.

Standout cornerback and team captain Ray Garcia was named the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) and Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference (KCAC) defensive player of the week on Monday, Sept. 11. Garcia, a 5'10" 180 lbs. senior from Las Vegas, was the driving force behind the Spires opening 25-22 home opening victory over Ottawa University Sept. 9.

"Ray deserves this. He earned this award," USM Head Football Coach Lance Hinson said. "I can't think of a corner [in the conference] that I would pick over him."

Garcia is the first player in USM athletics history to earn national player of the week status. On Sept. 9, he recorded arguably the best defensive game in the history of Saint Mary football. Garcia recorded three interceptions, one which was returned for a touchdown, three solo tackles, and broke up one pass. He was also active on special teams, returning a kickoff for a touchdown and blocked a field goal late in the game as well. His performance caught the watchful eye of first-year Athletic Director Rob Miller.

"Ray helped define what the next step is for Saint Mary athletics with his performance on Saturday," USM Athletic Director Rob Miller said. "We want our programs to take a giant step forward in both KCAC and NAIA competition. Ray receiving national recognition for his performance reflects the commitment towards excellence at USM."

Hinson said off-season conditioning pushed Garcia from a good 10-game starter last season to a great all-around player this season. Garcia's personal goal is to lead the nation in interceptions.

"Talk about his work ethic—that's what really gave him the extra jump Saturday," Hinson said. "He did some things Saturday night that I haven't seen since I was coaching in Division I."

In 2005, Garcia recorded four interceptions, with 19 pass break-ups, and 35 total tackles, 27 solo.

The University of Saint Mary is a private, co-educational applied liberal arts university founded by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. The University of Saint Mary is located at 4100 South 4th Street, Leavenworth, Kan., with additional locations at 11413 Pflumm in Overland Park and inside Providence Medical Center at 8929 Parallel Parkway in Kansas City, Kan.

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