Cortland’s Matt O’Connell and Ben Gaebel Earn Top ECAC Men’s Lacrosse Honors; Six Red Dragons on All-ECAC Team

SUNY Cortland senior midfielder Matt O’Connell (Camillus/West Genesee) has been selected as the 2006 Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) Division III Upstate New York Men’s Lacrosse Player of the Year, while senior Ben Gaebel (Deferiet/Carthage) has been tabbed as the ECAC Division III Upstate New York Men’s Lacrosse Goalie of the Year.

O’Connell and Gaebel are joined on the All-ECAC squad by four other Red Dragons – senior attack Kyle Lambert (Brentwood), senior midfielder Mike Abbott (Syracuse/Nottingham), junior long-stick midfielder Cheney Raymond (Camillus/West Genesee) and senior defenseman Dan Schmitt (North Syracuse/Cicero-North Syracuse).

The State University of New York Athletic Conference (SUNYAC) Player of the Year, O’Connell registered 31 goals and a team-best 31 assists this spring. He finished second on the team with 62 points and ranked 44th nationally in Division III with 1.55 assists per game.

Gaebel recorded 199 saves in 21 games, including a career-high 18 in Cortland’s 13-12 overtime win versus three-time defending champion Salisbury in the NCAA Division III championship game. Gaebel ranked sixth in Division III with a 6.16 goals against average and was 13th nationally with a 63.2 save percentage.

Lambert tallied a team-best 44 goals and tied for second with 23 assists this season. He led the Red Dragons with 67 points and also recorded 45 ground balls. Lambert finished as Cortland’s career leader with 164 goals scored and is tied for fifth on the school’s scoring charts with 217 points (164 goals, 53 assists).

Abbott finished the season with 40 goals and 11 assists for 51 points. He placed second on the team in goals and third in total points. Abbott also won 82-of-157 faceoffs for a 52 percent success rate and totaled 91 ground balls.

Raymond led Cortland with 105 ground balls, and his 5.0 ground balls per game average ranks 50th nationally in Division III. Raymond was also one of the nation’s most proficient long-stick scorers with 10 goals and three assists for 13 points.

Schmitt recorded 57 ground balls and had one assist in 19 games, all as a starter. His play helped the Cortland defense allow only 6.5 goals per game and permit 10 or more goals in a game only twice all season.

Cortland finished the season 18-3 and won its first Division III national title. The Red Dragons had previously won the USILA College Division crown in 1973 and the NCAA Division II championship in 1975.

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