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ALLEGHENY COLLEGE ★ DENISON UNIVERSITY ★ EARLHAM COLLEGE ★ HIRAM COLLEGE ★ KENYON COLLEGE ★ OBERLIN COLLEGE
★ OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY ★ WABASH COLLEGE ★ WITTENBERG UNIVERSITY ★ COLLEGE OF WOOSTER

NCAC Football Special

For Immediate Release

**NORTH COAST ANNOUNCES FOOTBALL PLAYERS OF THE YEAR;
KNOTT, HOWARD EARN INDIVIDUAL NODS**

November 28, 2001

CLEVELAND -- Wabash quarterback **Jake Knott (Lafayette, IN/Jefferson)** and Wittenberg defensive lineman **Juan Howard (Wooster, OH/Wooster)** have been honored for outstanding seasons by being named North Coast Athletic Conference Players of the Year. Knott receives the Mike Gregory Award as the NCAC's Offensive Player of the Year in only his second season of competition in NCAC football. The award is presented by Richard Gregory of Columbus, in honor of his father, a multi-sport standout at Denison in the 1920s. Howard, meanwhile, is the Defensive Player of the Year and receives the Hank Critchfield Award, commemorating the 1927 Wooster graduate.

Knott, a junior, led the North Coast in both total offense, averaging 322.5 yards over 10 games, and pass efficiency, with a rating of 154.1, during the regular season. He was also second in the NCAC in passing after averaging 290.9 yards per game. He had four games with five or more touchdowns including a season-high six against Allegheny. He threw for five touchdowns in three consecutive games and passed for a season-high 381 yards twice, once against Denison and once against DePauw. Wabash entered the North Coast athletic Conference in 1999, competing in all sports except football. The 2000 season was the Little Giants first NCAC league campaign.

Howard, a senior, had 25 solo tackles and 29 assists for a total of 39.5. He added 17 tackles for a loss of 67 yards, and five sacks during the regular season. Howard, a three-time All-NCAC player, has continued to turn in stellar performances as Wittenberg's season extends into the NCAA Div. III playoffs. His tackle total has jumped to 50.5, and he has amassed 21 tackles for a loss of 86 yards and six sacks for a loss of 58 yards. The Tigers face perennial NCAA champion Mt. Union on Saturday, at 12:00 p.m., in Alliance, OH.

Oberlin wide receiver **Ricky Valenzuela (Manteca, CA/Modesto)** is the North Coast's Newcomer of the Year. Valenzuela averaged 99 receiving yards per game for the Yeomen. His effort placed him second in the NCAC in 2001. Valenzuela, the second consecutive Newcomer of the Year to wear an Oberlin jersey, caught 59 passes in ten games this season, the third highest total in the league.

Wittenberg's **Joe Fincham** has been named Coach of the Year for the fourth time after guiding his team to its fourth straight North Coast crown. Wittenberg takes an 11-1 record into Saturday's game with the Purple Raiders. This is the third time in four years that the Tigers face Mt. Union in the Regional Final. Fincham is 63-6 (.913) in six seasons at Wittenberg.

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