

Stephens College Athletics

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Making the grade

Stephens College recognized with NAIA's Champions of Character Five Star Award

COLUMBIA — When it comes to advancing character-driven intercollegiate athletics, NAIA members are making the grade, according to results of the 2009-10 NAIA *Champions of Character* Scorecard released by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). Stephens College has been selected for the prestigious honor.

The Association, which boasts a proud reputation as an arena that promotes competitive athletics, academic excellence and character values simultaneously, will recognize 204 colleges and universities and 20 conferences with the *Champions of Character* Five Star Award. To receive the award members scored 60 or more points on the NAIA *Champions of Character* Scorecard and conferences named to the list had at least 60% of its member schools making the grade with 60 or more points.

“Stephens College is very proud of our student athletes and coaches, as well as the responsibility they take for being Champions of Character,” Stephens College Athletic Director Deb Duren said. “Someday, when the game is over, the individual participants will take away fond memories and good attitudes toward life after athletics.”

The scorecard was crafted to convert the NAIA's vision and strategy into measurable goals and to monitor progress towards advancing character-driven intercollegiate athletics. The initiative supports performance-driven athletics while defining expectations and standards that drive successful teams and athletics departments.

Institutions were measured based on a demonstrated commitment to *Champions of Character* and earned points in each of the following categories: character training, conduct in competition, academic focus, character recognition and character promotion. Institutions earned points based on exceptional student-athlete grade point averages and by obtaining zero ejections during competition throughout the course of the academic year.

Over 70% of member institutions and 77% of member conferences were named to the Five Star list. The top five schools include Cornerstone (Mich.) University, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, Cumberland (Tenn.) University, Southwestern (Kan.) College and Westmont (Calif.) College. Midlands Collegiate Athletic Conference and TranSouth Athletic Conference landed in the top spot with 100% of its member schools making the grade.

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Five Star Award recipients will be recognized on the NAIA *Champions of Character* website, and receive a special web banner and certificate noting the honor. Presidents, athletics directors and conference commissioners at award winning colleges, universities or conferences also will be recognized at the 70th Annual NAIA National Convention in April.

The Scorecard process is based on the NAIA's flagship program *Champions of Character*, which emphasizes the five core values of integrity, respect, responsibility, sportsmanship and servant leadership.