



## **MARIAN'S RODGERS NAMED NIC MVP, WASHINGTON'S JOHNSTON NAMED NIC COACH OF THE YEAR**

Marian's Jair Rodgers, who continues a recent run by Knights' players as the Northern Indiana Conference Most Valuable Player, and Washington coach Chad Johnson, who guided the Panthers to an unbeaten NIC season, are the top recipients of the 2015-2016 NIC boys basketball post-season honors. The NIC boys basketball post-season honors were voted upon by the league coaches.

In addition to Washington winning the overall title with a 12-0 record, Saint Joseph and Elkhart Central shared the North Division title with records of 4-1.

League MVP Rodgers leads the NIC all-conference first team, which features Rodgers, Elkhart Central's Cornell Conner, Saint Joseph's Dominick Ferro, Washington's Bryant Givens, Riley's Reontre Lawrence, and Penn's Matt Trehwella.

Coach Robb Berger's Marian program has now produced five of the last six MVP's in the Northern Indiana Conference. Current Notre Dame point guard Demetrius Jackson was named the NIC MVP in 2011, 2012 and 2013, and current Princeton star Devin Cannady was named the NIC MVP in 2015.

Rodgers averages 21.4 points, 3.6 rebounds, 1.8 steals, and 2.9 assists this season. He scored 20 points in Marian's 51-44 overtime victory against Culver Academy to lead the Knights to a Class 3-A sectional championship on Saturday night. Marian is 21-4 and posted a 10-2 record in the NIC.

"Winning the NIC MVP is a testament of Jair's strong character and work ethic," Berger stated. "The improvement of his game this past year has been tremendous. It is a great honor for Jair to be named the MVP for the largest conference in Indiana.

"Our conference was loaded with great players this year. What he lacks in size is made up by heart, desire, and a will to win. Jair is also the ultimate team player. He will be the first to say that this could not have been achievable without the support of his family and teammates."

Johnston's Panthers rolled to a 12-0 record in NIC competition, earning him the NIC Coach of the Year Award.

"I admire the coaches in our conference," Johnston said. "Every game, you know the other team is going to be well prepared. That comes from the programs they

continue to build. Each game, they continue to inspire me and push me to keep working. Their respect and being honored by them truly means a lot to me.

"I'm deeply grateful to my assistant coaches, who take time away from their families to scout, prepare, and help these young men become better people, and, most importantly, my wife Sarah and my two sons Kevin and Carter, who have supported me and our extended family, which is our players.

Conner, a 6-foot-3 junior forward, was a double-double threat for the Blue Blazers. He was a consistent force inside, averaging 15.5 points and 7.9 rebounds a game, and hitting 55 percent of his shots.

"I look at two things with Cornell," Elkhart Central coach Randy DeShone said. "No. 1, he's a talent. He's got a lot of ability. You look on the floor. He is starting to develop the skills to go with his natural ability. If he gets it hand-in-hand where he really understands the game, his game will really elevate.

"What I really like about him, in the locker room, now, where you really start talking about the different parts of the game, and being a student of the game, he's listening, he's trying to do what you're teaching, so he's become a player who is not all athleticism."

DeShone said that Conner has made tremendous strides in maturing as a person, particularly in the classroom.

"Cornell is becoming a great role model for kids," DeShone said. "I love telling this situation. Last year ... four F's ... I was almost ready to boot him off the team. We started working on it. This year, last semester, he made the honor roll. That is just a tremendous thing to think about that kid and what he's done in the classroom. When he talks as a leader of the team, it is always positive, it is always about the team, and it is never about him. It's always what we can do to be more together.

"You look at Cornell as a talent, but you also have to look at him as far as what he's become as far as a person and as far as a worker in practice. That's completely different this year. Last year, we couldn't make it through anything. This year, he's one of our hardest working players. It's all those things that make him, and make me proud for him on what he's become."

Ferro averaged 16 points a game to help Saint Joseph contend for the NIC crown. The 6-foot-2 senior guard averaged 1.5 assists and 2.0 steals a game.

"Dominick is a tremendous offensive player as well as an instinctive defender," Saint Joseph coach Mike Bauer said. "He has been a leader for our team, setting an excellent example of work ethic for the younger guys."

Washington's Givens, a 6-0 senior guard, scored 15.4 points, and averaged five rebounds and five assists a game in powering the Panthers' NIC championship run.

"Bryant has been around our program for a long time," Washington coach Johnston said. "He has been patiently waiting his turn and he's responded. Bryant not only works hard in practice, but he takes the initiative to put in a lot of individual work on his own in the gym and weight room. He's a leader.

"Bryant knows what we expect from him and more importantly, he knows what his team expects from him," Johnston continued. "As much of a scorer he has become, he really gets his team involved defending, passing, and rebounding the basketball on both ends. Most importantly Bryant is a good student and a great leader on and off the floor and in his community."

Reontre Lawrence, a 6-2 senior wing, led Riley to a Class 4-A sectional championship with a 25-point effort against Plymouth in a 60-54 victory for the Wildcats against the host Pilgrims.

Lawrence averaged 16.7 points, 4.6 rebounds, 3.8 assists a game, and hit 45 percent of his 3's.

"Reontre is one of the top players in the NIC, which means he is one of the top players in the state of Indiana," Riley coach Mark Johnson said. "Reontre is a complete player. He can score, defend, pass, rebound and shoot.

"Reontre shows our team everyday the importance of hard work," Johnson added. "He asks nothing of his teammates that he doesn't do himself."

Penn's Matt Trehwella, a 6-foot-5 senior, reinvented himself as an exceptional wing after playing the post position as a junior. Trehwella averaged 8.1 points as a junior. He averaged 20.4 points, 4.1 rebounds, 2.1 assists a game this season. Trehwella only took one 3-pointer last season, a desperation heave at the buzzer. This season, Trehwella hit 41 three-pointers, connecting on a 3 in 23 of Penn's 24 games.

"Matt has had a tremendous senior season," Penn coach Al Rhodes said. "Not only has he led us in scoring, but has also guarded the best player of the opposing team. His work ethic and leadership have been tremendous! Matt is very deserving of first team NIC!"

## **Northern Indiana Conference**

### **All-NIC Boys' Basketball 2015-2016**

#### **First Team**

Cornell Conner	11	Elkhart Central
Jair Rodgers	12	Marian
Matt Trehwella	12	Penn
Reontre Lawrence	12	Riley
Dominick Ferro	12	Saint Joseph
Bryant Givens	12	Washington

#### **Second Team**

Damezi Anderson	10	Riley
Ryan Topper	12	Bremen

Alec Runyan	12	John Glenn
Peyton Staples	12	Mishawaka
Mark Madden	12	Saint Joseph
Kaylen Andrews	12	Washington

### **Honorable Mention**

Walter Ellis	10	Adams
Zach Lattimer	10	Marian
Adam DeShone	12	Elkhart Central
Trevor Hobbs	12	Jimtown
Jordon Arch	12	Mishawaka
Tony Brazier	12	Washington
Lorenzo Glass	12	Washington

**NIC MVP – Jair Rodgers of Marian**

**NIC Coach of the Year – Chad Johnston of Washington**

### **NIC Standings for 2015-16**

1 – SB Washington	12-0	40.00	Coach – Chad Johnston
2 - Marian	10-2	37.50	
3 – Saint Joseph	9-3	33.75	
3 – Riley	9-3	33.75	
5 – Elkhart Central	8-4	30.00	

6 – Adams	6-6	25.00
6 - Mishawaka	6-6	25.00
6 – Penn	6-6	25.00
9 – John Glenn	4-8	20.00
10-New Prairie	3-9	16.25
10-Jimtown	3-9	16.25
12-Clay	2-10	12.50
13-Bremen	0-12	10.00