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WAKE FOREST'S JON BAKERO WINS THE 2017 SENIOR CLASS AWARD® FOR MEN'S SOCCER

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. (December 8, 2017) – Wake Forest forward Jon Bakero has been selected through nationwide balloting as the 2017 Senior CLASS Award® winner in NCAA® Division I men's soccer. With Bakero's win, Wake Forest became just the second school in Senior CLASS Award history to earn back-to-back wins in the same sport after Jacori Hayes took home the honor a year ago. The first was Ohio State, which had back-to-back men's soccer winners in 2015 and 2014.

The award, chosen by a vote of Division I men's soccer coaches, national soccer media and fans, is given annually to the most outstanding senior student-athlete in Division I men's soccer. To be eligible for the award, a student-athlete must be classified as an NCAA Division I senior and have notable achievements in four areas of excellence: classroom, community, character and competition.

An acronym for *Celebrating Loyalty and Achievement for Staying in School*®, the Senior CLASS Award—presented annually in 10 NCAA sports—focuses on the total student-athlete and encourages students to use their platform in athletics to make a positive impact as leaders in their communities. Bakero is the third overall Wake Forest student-athlete to win the Senior CLASS Award behind Hayes and fellow men's soccer player Sam Cronin in 2008.

"I am very honored to win the Senior CLASS Award," said Bakero, who led the Demon Deacons to back-to-back ACC titles in 2016 and 2017. "You come into Wake Forest as a freshman and you see the captains we had—Sam Fink, Michael Gamble, Ian Harkes, Jacori Hayes—and you want to be like them. When they left, we had to fill those shoes. I was lucky enough to get that opportunity and play for a great team alongside some other great seniors and all of our great teammates. It's been an unbelievable joy to experience this. Every day I'm just thankful for every opportunity I have to be out here and get better as a player and as a person."

Already named the ACC Offensive Player of the Year and one of 15 semifinalists for the MAC Hermann Trophy given to the top player in college soccer, Bakero has earned a reputation as one of the most skilled men's collegiate soccer players in the nation. Through the end of November, Bakero led the nation in points with 46—eight more than any other player—while ranking second with 16 goals, 14 assists and six game-winning goals. Named to the All-ACC First Team this season, Bakero had previously earned third-team honors in 2015 and both ACC All-Tournament and NCAA College Cup All-Tournament honors in 2016. For his career, the

four-year starter now ranks in the top-five in Wake Forest career history with 37 goals, 26 assists and 100 points.

Equally as impressive in the classroom, Bakero has been named to the Athletic Director's Honor Roll in three-straight semesters as a communications major. In 2016-17, he also was named to the ACC Academic Honor Roll, one of just nine members of the team to receive the honor.

"Jon is a man of tremendous character, and he's one of the most successful players on the field, but one of the most humble players I've ever coached off the field," said Head Coach Bobby Muuss, who earned his third-straight ACC Coach of the Year honor this season. "He always wants to do right by his teammates, his coaching staff, his university and the department. The way he embraces the fans and the way the fans embrace him, it's something special. This award embodies not just your play on the field, but also your character, your community service and your academics. Here's a young man who came from Spain three and a half years ago with broken English. Now, he's doing extremely well in school and a role model both on and off the field. I speak on behalf of the entire program when I say how proud I am of him and how he represents Wake Forest soccer."

Beyond the areas of competition and classroom, Bakero has maintained a high level of personal character throughout his college career and has prioritized community service and outreach. This season, Bakero has taken the lead this year with Wake Forest's partnership with Team IMPACT. An organization that improves the quality of life for children facing life-threatening and chronic illnesses through the power of team, Team IMPACT helped Wake Forest "sign" a young man named Asher McGarrah, who has Chronic Myeloid Leukemia. Bakero spends time with him at practice and outside of sports building a relationship with Asher and his family.

"I just try to be myself—to enjoy every day, enjoy every opportunity that God gives me to be here," said Bakero. "Sometimes it seems like we're giving back to the community, but what we get back from the community is much bigger than that. The Winston-Salem community welcomed me with open arms when I got here and every chance I have to give back, I do it."

Throughout his four years at Wake Forest, Bakero also has given his time to organizations, event and causes such as Habitat for Humanity, delivering food to the hungry in the community, designing desks for underprivileged elementary school students, Help Our People Eat (H.O.P.E.), the 3-2-1 Deacon Dash for Down Syndrome and a number of soccer clinics.

"It's a privilege to honor an outstanding student-athlete like Jon Bakero," said Senior CLASS Award Executive Director Erik Miner. "What he's done in all four areas—classroom, character, community and competition—is truly impressive and should be inspirational to other collegiate athletes. We offer our sincere congratulations to Jon, his team and the entire university."

For more information, visit seniorCLASSaward.com.

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First-Team Senior CLASS Award All-Americans

Jon Bakero, Wake Forest
Fraser Colmer, Radford
Jimmy Fiscus, Michigan State
Foster Langsdorf, Stanford
Wyatt Omsberg, Dartmouth

Second-Team Senior CLASS Award All-Americans

Mamadou Guirassy, NJIT
Tomas Hilliard-Arce, Stanford
Niki Jackson, Grand Canyon
Tim Kubel, Louisville
Grant Lillard, Indiana

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ABOUT THE AWARD

An acronym for *Celebrating Loyalty and Achievement for Staying in School*, the Senior CLASS Award honors the attributes of senior student-athletes in four areas: community, classroom, character and competition. The award program is designed exclusively for college seniors who are utilizing their complete athletic eligibility, remaining committed to their university and pursuing the many rewards a senior season can bring. Premier Sports Management manages the award.

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