FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NESCAC Volleyball All-Conference Teams Unveiled

HADLEY, Mass. – Tufts senior Maddie Stewart (Menlo Park, Calif.) is the NESCAC Player of the Year as voted by the league’s coaches. Stewart was also named to the All-NESCAC First Team after earning Second Team honors last season. Stewart is the third Jumbo to garner Player of the Year honors since 2009, joining Dana Feiger (2009) and Kendall Lord (2011).

An outside hitter, Stewart ranks second in the NESCAC with a .383 hitting percentage, is fourth in kills with 274 (2.85 kills per set), and seventh in blocks (64). She has scored 316.5 points for Tufts this season, which ranks second in the league. Stewart helped the Jumbos claim their second NESCAC title in program history and first since 1996, by providing the championship-clinching kill to win the deciding fifth set, 15-13, and the overall match, 3-2, over Bowdoin. She finished the NESCAC Championship hitting .380 with 35 kills over three matches.

Wesleyan junior Phia Bellizzi (Ladera Ranch, Calif.) was voted as the NESCAC Defensive Player of the Year. She is the second Cardinal to garner the honor since 2000, joining Ruby Hernandez who earned the award in 2009 and 2010. The league leader in digs per set (6.17), she helped Wesleyan earn the No. 2 seed in the NESCAC Championship and reach the semifinals for the third straight season. Bellizzi was also selected to the All-NESCAC First Team for the second straight year and picks up her third all-conference honor overall after being named to the Second Team in 2017.

Bellizzi’s teammate, first-year Bella Ahearn (Orlando, Fla.) was named the NESCAC Rookie of the Year. An outside hitter, Ahearn ranks third for the Cardinals with 2.57 kills per set and has scored 205.0 points for Wesleyan this season. Her .330 hitting percentage in NESCAC matches ranks seventh among the leaders in conference-only statistics. Ahearn is the second Wesleyan player to be named NESCAC Rookie of the Year since 2000, joining Julia Gibbs (2009). Bellizzi and Ahearn will lead the Cardinals into the NCAA Tournament as Wesleyan travels to Clarkson for the opening rounds.

Tufts head coach Cora Thompson was selected as the NESCAC Coach of the Year by her peers. Thompson earns the honor for the third time in four years, and seventh overall in her 17-year tenure at the helm of the Jumbos. She led Tufts to a perfect 10-0 mark in league play this season to earn the No. 1 seed in the NESCAC Championship. The Jumbos won their second NESCAC title in program history, the other was in 1996, and earned the NESCAC’s automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament. The Jumbos will host a NCAA Regional at Cousens Gymnasium this weekend.