

Bielmeier Named Draddy Trophy Semifinalist

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DALLAS - UW-Eau Claire football player **Paul Bielmeier** (Sr. -Edgar, Wis.) has been named a semifinalist for the 2008 Draddy Trophy, presented by HealthSouth, and a candidate for the National Football Foundation & College Hall of Fame (NFF) 2008 National Scholar-Athlete Awards, the NFF recently announced.

Bielmeier, one of the 37 nominees from NCAA Division III and 164 national contestants, currently holds a 3.93 cumulative grade point average and is majoring in kinesiology with a physical education teaching emphasis. A safety for the Blugolds, Bielmeier has earned three letters and was the Blugolds' special teams newcomer of the year in 2005. He has played in 34 games in his career and has started in four. Last season he earned recognition on the CoSIDA/ESPN The Magazine Academic All-District V second team. Academically, Bielmeier has received academic distinction honors and has appeared on the Dean's List six times in his college career.

One of college football's most sought after and competitive awards, the Draddy Trophy recognizes an individual as the absolute best in the country for his combined academic success, football performance and exemplary community leadership.

Nominated by their schools, which are limited to one nominee each, semifinalists must be a senior or graduate student in their final year of eligibility, have a GPA of at least 3.2 on a 4.0 scale, have outstanding football ability as a first-team player or significant contributor, and have demonstrated strong leadership and citizenship. Established to honor former NFF Chairman Vincent dePaul Draddy, a Manhattan College quarterback who developed the Izod and Lacoste brands, the award comes with a 25-pound bronze trophy and a \$25,000 post-graduate scholarship.

This year's semifinalists maintain a 3.56 average GPA and 67 players have earned all-conference recognition on the field, while 102 have served as team captains. Nominees hail from all NCAA divisions and the NAIA.

The NFF Awards Committee will select and announce up to 15 finalists on Oct. 29. Each finalist will be recognized as part of the 2008 National Scholar-Athlete Class, receiving an \$18,000 post-graduate scholarship. The Draddy winner, who will receive a \$25,000 postgraduate scholarship, will be announced at the NFF's Annual Awards Dinner on December 9 at the prestigious Waldorf=Astoria in New York City. A total distribution of more than \$300,000 in scholarships will be awarded that evening.

Launched in 1959, the NFF scholar-athlete program became the first initiative in history to credit a player for both academic and athletic accomplishments. The Draddy, first awarded in 1990, adds to the program's mystique, having previously honored two Rhodes Scholars, a Rhodes Scholar finalist and a Heisman winner.

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