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Roger Crosley

603-247-0471

newenglandfootballwriters@gmail.com

Central Connecticut's Toatley Named Recipient of New England Football Writers Nason Award

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – Central Connecticut State University defensive lineman Dan Toatley has been named recipient of the New England Football Writers Jerry Nason Award presented to the senior student-athlete who has succeeded in football against all odds. The award will be presented at the New England Football Writers Captains and Awards Banquet on Thursday, December 12, at the Sheraton Framingham (Mass.) Hotel and Conference Center.

A native of Trenton, N.J., Toatley began his career as a walk-on in 2019 for the Blue Devils and has worked his way up to being a first team All-Northeast Conference selection. He redshirted that first year, and following the 2020 COVID season when Central Connecticut did not play a game, Toatley played in just three games during 2021. In 2022 he moved into a starting role where he recorded two sacks and 42 tackles. He was voted a team captain in 2023, leading the NEC in sacks with six, making 52 total tackles and being named first-team All-NEC. As of this writing he is currently tied for second in the NEC with 7.5 sacks in 2024.

Over a 10-month stretch between 2021 and 2022, Toatley suffered the deaths of both his father and brother. Those devastating experiences inspired Toatley to find a way to honor his family members. Based on the experience of former teammate Mike Mushaw, the CCSU football team sponsors a marrow drive on campus every year, where students, faculty and staff have a cheek swab performed. Toatley matched with a patient in need last winter and on February 24, 2024, underwent the procedure to harvest his marrow at Medstar Georgetown University Hospital. After the procedure, Toatley could not participate in any physical activities or team workouts for a month.

"I lost my brother and father," says Toatley. "For me, it was a way to honor them, and if you're able to save a life then hopefully somebody else won't have to go through that pain that I did losing two family members."

Toatley is the first CCSU player to be honored by the NEFC with the Nason Award. The award has been presented since 1958.

Any persons wishing to attend the NEFW Banquet can make reservations on-line at <https://newenglandfootballwriters.com/captains-%26-awards-banquet>. Reservations are non-refundable and must be made by Friday, December 6.

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