

## **Baker Finalist For Gene Upshaw Award**

Written by Staff Reports

Wednesday, 27 November 2013 22:59

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Lenoir-Rhyne Football's Blake Baker has been selected as a finalist for the 2013 Gene Upshaw Division II Lineman of the Year Award. The winner will be announced on December 16.

Baker, a junior defensive lineman from Bethlehem, N.C., has 39 tackles on the year including 16.5 takedowns for a loss to go along with a league-leading 10.5 quarterback sacks.

Baker also has four quarterback hurries, one fumble recovery and one forced fumble this year en route to First-Team All-South Atlantic Conference honors.

Baker helps anchor a defense which is currently ranked third nationally in scoring defense (13.8 ppg) and eighth in rushing defense (85.9 ypg). L-R leads the SAC in total defense (307.6 ypg) as well.

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Lenoir-Rhyne (10-1), winners of 10 straight and ranked No. 13 in NCAA Division II, won its third straight league title this year and will host Carson-Newman (10-2) in the second round of the playoffs on Saturday at Noon. The Bears earned the top seed in the region.

The finalists include a record five defensive linemen and a repeat finalist from 2012. Six of the eight finalists played for teams that reached the NCAA Division II Tournament and five are set to play in the second round of the playoffs on November 30.

The award is sponsored by the Manheim Touchdown Club and voted upon by the nation's NCAA Division II sports information directors. Two finalists advance from each of the four NCAA Division II super regions.

The award recipient has an invitation to participate in front of professional scouts and coaches at the East-West Shrine Game in St. Petersburg, Fla., or the NFLPA Collegiate Bowl in Carson, Calif. Both games are scheduled for January 18. The winner will also be recognized at the Manheim Touchdown Club's annual banquet in May.

The NFL recognizes, endorses and supports the winner of the award by guaranteeing a place in the all-star games. The support comes as recognition and appreciation for the late Mr. Upshaw, who was not only an All-Pro lineman for the Oakland Raiders, but later served as the executive director of the NFL Players Association for 25 years. Upshaw, a former standout offensive lineman at Texas A&I University (now Texas A&M-Kingsville), was inducted into the Pro

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Football Hall of Fame in 2007 in his first year of eligibility.

## **Gene Upshaw NCAA Division II**

### **Lineman Of The Year Award**

#### **2013 Finalists**

Darius Allen, Colorado State-Pueblo

Matt Armstrong, Grand Valley State

**Blake Baker, Lenoir-Rhyne**

Brian Clarke, Bloomsburg

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Troy Harris, Mars Hill

Kelton Hays, Henderson State

Jake Metz, Shippensburg

Chris Schaudt, Minnesota State Mankato

**Photo Courtesy: Blake Baker, L-R Athletics**