

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Karen S. Johnson, Executive Director of Communications

Date: July 29, 2008

Lions Hoopster Tyler Gordon Earns National Record

HANCOCK – During the winter months when he was five or six years old, Tyler Gordon, Bayfield, Wisc., would sit on a snow bank and shoot baskets, said his uncle, Dean Gordon.

This early interest in basketball, combined with a natural ability and the dedication to complete hours of drills and practice, has earned Tyler Gordon, 21, a National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) statistical title and a place in the NCAA record books.

July 28, 2008, the Finlandia University Athletics Department presented Gordon with a NCAA plaque recognizing his achievement of 99 steals in 25 games, an average of 4.0 per game, during the 2008 basketball season, the highest average of steals in the 2008 season by any men's basketball player in NCAA Divisions I, II, and III.

Gordon is heads above the NCAA players who follow him in the record book. NCAA Division III player Aswad Thomas of Elms College, Chicopee, Mass., averaged 3.6 steals last season, matching Garrett Lever of Division II University of Nebraska-Kearney. Division I player Devin Gibson, University of Texas at San Antonio, averaged 3.3 steals.

"Only a handful of students-athletes can say they were the best in their field and it is an honor for which you can be proud," said Jim Wright, director of statistics for the NCAA, in a letter to Gordon announcing the award

"Two thumbs up!" gestured Dean Gordon when asked how he reacted when he heard the news. "He's a great kid!"

At Bayfield High School, where he played four years of varsity basketball, Gordon broke the school record for most steals, most points, most assists, and most points in playoff contests.

Gordon has played two seasons of Lions basketball. He discovered Finlandia through his cousin, Chris Peterson, a supporter of Finlandia Athletics, and through participation in an independent basketball tournament at Finlandia in spring 2006.

Gordon didn't expect to attain this level of success in steals. "I did a lot of drills to become quicker on my feet and worked on my hand-eye coordination. I knew I could score and my offense is strong, but I didn't expect this level of success. It definitely exceeded my expectations."

“When I started I just worked to become very competitive,” Gordon added. “Earning this record wasn’t really a goal. It just happened. I have been told I have fast hands, but I didn’t realize how fast!”

“Sometimes the importance of the role steals play in winning a basketball game is underappreciated,” noted Charlie Kemppainen, Finlandia’s head men’s basketball coach. “But every time the ball is stolen from the opposing team it robs them of opportunities for shots.”

Gordon shares his success with Lions student-athlete Ryan Artley and several other Finlandia men’s basketball starters in the 2007-08 season. “Overall we had a very good season,” he said. “I owe the attainment of this record to Coach Kemppainen and my fellow players.”

Kemppainen estimates that basketball players complete close to two steals per game. Gordon has more than doubled that with his of 4.0 steals per game average.

“Tyler has great anticipation and reads the offense very well. This, and his continuous practice and preparation have paid off for him,” said Kemppainen.

For additional information about the Finlandia University men’s basketball program, please contact Coach Kemppainen at 487-7238 or charlie.kemppainen@finlandia.edu.

Photo cutlines:

1) Tyler Gordon with the NCAA plaque recognizing his achievement of 99 steals in 25 games during the 2008 Finlandia University basketball season

2) Tyler Gordon, center, with Finlandia University Head Soccer Coach Charlie Kemppainen (right) and Finlandia Sports Information Director Curtis Wittenberg.

For high resolution photo files, please contact Karen Johnson, karen.johnson@finlandia.edu, 906-487-7348.