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**The Sport Changes Life Foundation Announces the return of the  
2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Basketball Hall of Fame Belfast Classic  
-Tuesday, May 22, 2018-**

NCAA Division I College basketball is coming back to Belfast, Northern Ireland for 2018. The Sport Changes Life Foundation (SCLF) in partnership with the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame (BHOF) and the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) will host its second 'Belfast Classic' in the SSE Arena, Belfast on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> and 1 December 2018. The tournament will be broadcast live across America.

The 2018 event will feature an expanded field to eight schools. The schools will compete in two four-team brackets, with University campus round games in America leading into two tournament brackets in Belfast aptly named 'Samson' and 'Goliath' after the iconic Harland and Wolfe cranes in the Titanic quarter ship yard of Belfast.

The field for the 2018 event is as follows: **University at Albany** (America East Conference), **University at Buffalo** (Mid-American Conference), **Dartmouth College** (Ivy League), **LIU Brooklyn** (Northeast Conference), **Marist College** (Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference), **University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee** (Horizon League), **University of San Francisco** (West Coast Conference) and **Stephen F. Austin State University** (Southland Conference). Brackets and exact schedules will be announced at a later date.

The Basketball Hall of Fame Belfast Classic was set up to raise awareness of the Sport Changes Life Foundation (SCLF). Established in 2007, Sport Changes Life is dedicated to raising the aspirations of young people using sporting excellence, academic achievement and personal development. SCLF achieves this through its flagship Victory Scholar Program which brings graduate student athletes from the US to Northern Ireland and Ireland to deliver a number of youth engagement programs with young people at risk. The impact and legacy of the 2017 event has been absolutely phenomenal with over 9,000 people in attendance at our event while a United States television audience watched the games live via our broadcast partner CBS Sports Network.

"We are so proud of how far the Sport Change's Life Foundation has come in the last few years. Our Victory Scholars and our community engagement programs are truly making an impact in thousands of young people lives. The inaugural Basketball Hall of Fame Belfast Classic 2017 was a huge success and this year we are delighted that we have twice as many teams to engage in our community when they are here. This allows us to expand our reach to young people, which is our core business. It also allows us to showcase the importance of an international experience for American student-athletes and celebrate how good our city is at hosting major sporting events" added Gareth Maguire CEO of Sport Changes Life.

“The Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame is a proud partner of this event. We are very fortunate to have this international opportunity to showcase the Hall of Fame brand. We thank Sport Changes Life, the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference, the participating schools, and all of our partners who make this become a reality for the student-athletes who won’t forget this experience,” said John L. Doleva, President and CEO of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

“We at Sport Changes Life are delighted to present our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual BHOF Belfast Classic in partnership with the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame and the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference. We are so excited to welcome eight fantastic teams to the city of Belfast. We look forward to welcoming new partners to our event and we are extremely thankful to our returning partners the Rory Foundation, Aer Lingus, Belfast City Council, Basketball Ireland, Velocity World Wide, STATS Sports and Chaka Travel as we showcase to the world the wonderful city of Belfast and what Northern Ireland has to offer,” said Marc Mulholland, Executive Director of the BHOF Belfast Classic.

In addition to the Basketball Hall of Fame Belfast Classic, a series of ongoing community relations events and initiatives will be held in the Belfast vicinity. Formal announcements surrounding specific events and ticket information will be released at a later date.

### **Quotes from Host Conference & Participating Head Coaches**

#### **RICH ENSOR, MAAC COMMISSIONER**

*“The ability to expand the Belfast Classic to a full 8-team MTE competition is very exciting to the MAAC membership,” notes Richard Ensor, Commissioner of the MAAC and co-founder of the Classic. “It begins the next stage in expanding the MAAC brand of excellence in academics and athletics to Ireland and the city of Belfast which so strongly supported the Classic last year. The ability to make a difference in the lives of Belfast’s children with our partner Sports Changes Life makes all the effort worthwhile.”*

#### **WILL BROWN, UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY**

*“We are very excited to be participating in the Hall of Fame Belfast Classic. This is a wonderful opportunity for our program to travel to Ireland and represent the University at Albany and the America East Conference. The cultural and basketball experience will be something that our student-athletes will remember for a lifetime. We are looking forward to developing new relationships with Basketball Ireland and the people of Belfast.”*

#### **NATE OATS, UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO**

*“We’re thrilled and excited to participate in this event. This is an incredible opportunity for our players and coaches to experience something they’ll remember for the rest of their lives by embracing new cultures, while playing top-notch Division I basketball. We are also proud to represent our University and its excellent reputation in academics and athletics on an international stage.”*

#### **DAVID MCLAUGHLIN, DARTMOUTH COLLEGE**

*“We are extremely excited to be a part of the Basketball Hall of Fame Belfast Classic this year. Not only does this give our players and program an opportunity to compete against other talented programs, but to do so on an international stage. We are looking forward to competing in Belfast as well as*

*experiencing a different culture. This is a great addition to our unique and competitive schedule for the 2018-19 season."*

**DEREK KELLOGG, LIU**

*"We couldn't be more excited to participate in the Belfast Classic. I have had the great opportunity to work with Greg and the Hall of Fame for many years now, and their tournaments are always first class. It is a tremendous opportunity for our guys to see the beautiful country of Ireland, experience a new culture, and get to play great competition while doing so."*

**JOHN DUNNE, MARIST COLLEGE**

*"Being part of the Belfast Classic will be a great cultural experience for our program. We're looking forward to being part of a competitive field that has expanded to eight teams this year. I appreciate the work done by the MAAC, Basketball Hall of Fame, and our hosts in Belfast for putting a terrific event together."*

**PAT BALDWIN, WISCONSIN MILWAUKEE UNIVERSITY**

*"The mission for our young men at Milwaukee is to have a world-class experience on and off the court. This is a tremendous opportunity for them to compete, represent the Panthers globally and enjoy this great student-athlete experience in the beautiful country of Ireland. In addition, it will be a unique fan opportunity for our families and supporters of the program."*

**KYLE SMITH, SAN FRANCISCO UNIVERSITY**

*"We're thrilled to be a part of this event," said head coach Kyle Smith. "To go across the Atlantic to play against top-flight competition in regular-season games is really going to be fun. We've spoken to other people who have played in this tournament and they have all said that it's a spectacular event. We couldn't be more excited."*

**KYLE KELLER, STEPHEN F. AUSTIN**

*"We are excited to be selected by Basketball Hall of Fame to participate in the Belfast Classic. What a tremendous opportunity for our players not only on the court but from an educational standpoint culturally to experience Ireland. We appreciate being able to partner with Hall of Fame in such a wonderful event. We will have tremendous competition with other NCAA tournament caliber opponents that will help us get ready for our tough conference schedule."*

**About The Sport Changes Life Foundation:** The primary goal of the Sport Changes Life Foundation is to provide an opportunity for raising the aspiration of young people on both sides of the Atlantic so that they can live out their dreams and guide them as sport changes their lives. We are a sports foundation built on inspiration, hope and victory. SCL works in disadvantaged communities to help young people find a path to a brighter future with the help of our international student-athletes, the Victory Scholars. In February 2016, SCL formally partnered with Rory McIlroy charity the Rory Foundation, as both foundations strive together to help change the lives of young people on the island of Ireland and beyond.

**About the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame:** Located in Springfield, Massachusetts, the city where basketball was invented, the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame promotes and

preserves the game of basketball at every level – professional, collegiate and high school, for both men and women on the global stage.

**About the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference:** With 11 institutions strongly bound by the sound principles of quality and integrity in academics and excellence in athletics, the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) is in its 37th year of competition during the 2017-2018 academic year. Current conference members include: Canisius College, Fairfield University, Iona College, Manhattan College, Marist College, Monmouth University, Niagara University, Quinnipiac University, Rider University, Saint Peter's University, and Siena College.

**About the Rory Foundation:** The Rory Foundation was established in 2013 by golfer Rory McIlroy to help children live better lives, to raise funds and offer support to children's charities with a special meaning and purpose for Rory. Beneficiaries of the Rory Foundation so far include the Cancer Fund for Children, Mencap NI and Sport Changes Life (all based in Northern Ireland), Barretstown, the Jack & Jill Foundation and LauraLynn Children's Hospice. The Rory Foundation will host the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open for the third year in 2017.

**About Aer Lingus:**

Aer Lingus is the national airline of Ireland, founded in 1936. It operates 62 aircraft on routes across Europe and North America carrying 12 million guests per annum. Aer Lingus' mission is to be the leading value carrier operating on the North Atlantic. It is the only airline operating between the United States and Ireland, which has a 4-Star rating (as awarded by Skytrax, the international air transport rating organization). Aer Lingus is a member of International Airlines Group (IAG), one of the world's largest airline groups.

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