

SPORTS

Smith Reflects on First Lacrosse Season

The NC Wesleyan's women's lacrosse team completed its first season, winning 3 matches and losing 12. Head Coach Lorin Smith was asked by the Decree sports staff to reflect on the season and look ahead to next year.

What do you take away from this season, the first here at North Carolina Wesleyan College?

I think that the team had a great first season. I personally learned a lot about being a college coach. This is new to me and watching my players develop into stellar athletes has made me believe that I'm doing something right here. I think that team chemistry is the biggest part of success. If my girls don't trust each other on or off the field then we can't be successful. Thankfully this season we learned to trust in one-another and had a great first year because of it.

What were the positives in the season?

First off: We won three games and one was to a program out of Maryland, a hotbed for lacrosse! Aside from the obvious wins, I saw players who had never picked up a stick before become outstanding lacrosse players. Lauren Stearns, in particular, developed into one of our key defenders and she made many teams' scouting reports. I think that is a huge compliment to our program.

Was there a particular game that was a high point of the year?

Hood was most definitely a high point for the girls. The team had to pull everything together to beat Hood in overtime. We had a problem in the beginning of the season with some of my new players giving up early in the game because the other team would pull ahead by three or four goals. In lacrosse that's not a big deal—a team can score three goals in a minute if they work for it. The Hood game was the first in the season where not one of my girls gave up...they fought until the end and because of it we were able to win.

What was the low point? Why?

A low point this season was probably our game against Methodist. We had just come off of a win from Ferrum and we did not show up to play in that game. They ended up beating us 21-4. It was the most goals we had scored against us and the girls just gave up. We went through a three game slump where we just didn't play up to par and the girls recognized it and together we pulled it together...which I guess led to a high!

What would you say are the strengths of the team that you hope to build on?

Our strength is our bond. These girls treat each other with respect and they respect me. We work for each other and that's what made us successful. No one on this team wants to let a teammate down. I come to practice and to games prepared to instruct the team on the

best ways to be successful. If I didn't do my job the girls wouldn't be prepared come game time. Each of the players does her own job to ensure the success of the team. When we all work together we are successful regardless if the game ends with a win or a loss.

How would you characterize the chemistry of the team? (You had a lot of athletes from different sports, as well as a mix of experienced lacrosse players and newcomers).

My experienced girls were very patient with my newcomers. They were helpful and many times at practice I had a newcomer paired up with an experienced player in hopes that my newcomers would learn some tricks from my experienced kids.

It took a while to separate my "soccer kids" from my "cross country kids." In every drill we did in the beginning of the season the girls had to partner up with someone they had never played a sport with—it made them make new friends and by the end of the season they were partnering up with the players that challenged them the most. It was great to see because it meant this group of girls was finally a team. It was a proud moment for me.

Who are the key returners next year?

Allie Style will return next season for certain. I had her play a lot of midfield this spring, which of course she hated! Based on the recruits coming in next year it would appear that she will finally be moving out to a strictly attack position.

Sarah Smith will return and she will most likely play in the midfield again. Sarah was a sleeper this year. I think that she has a whole lot of talent but she hasn't blossomed yet.

Next year will be her year to shine!

Alexa Ashworth is an amazing defender and we will be so lucky if she doesn't transfer next fall. She led the conference in defensive caused turnovers and groundballs. She did not receive the recognition that she deserved although that's the cost of playing defense, I suppose. She is a true leader out on the field and the girls listen to her on defense.

Buffy Casto is transferring this fall to Guilford College. It is unfortunate for the team because she was a huge asset this spring; however, I have spoken with some of the girls and we are confident that although she will be missed as a friend and teammate, the girls will continue to be successful. I think that a lot of my girls (Allie, Sarah, and Haley Griffiths in particular) did not go to goal as much as they could have because they depended on Buffy

to run the show. With Buffy gone next spring my other talented players will have to pick up their games and take more shots. Buffy was successful because she took a lot of shots. If you don't shoot you won't score and my other players who were capable of shooting took a backseat to Buffy. We will be a different team next year for sure. If my girls step up the way I expect that they will...we will be a better team.

What are your main goals as far as recruitment this off-season?

My goal for recruitment is to bring in as many players as I can! I mostly recruit up north because they breed lacrosse players in Maryland and New York. I'm really looking forward to a couple of players slated to play next spring. I think that we are going to give a lot of conference teams a show and we should finish with a much better record next April.

Trevor's Golf Diary

By Trevor Seibert
Decree Sports Editor

(Editor's Note: This spring, *The Decree* has followed the progress of Trevor Seibert, a former Bishops wide receiver, who turned to golf after a career-ending injury during last summer's football training camp).

When I left everyone last time I believe I was on the verge of giving up. I'm very glad that I did not.

After the Myrtle Beach tournament I was feeling very bad about everything that had to do with golf, but I continued working hard at my game and found that I shouldn't be trying to hit the ball as far as everyone else. If I can hit my 6-iron consistently 140 yards, then I should do it instead of trying to hit it 160-170 yards, which is about what a solid golfer can hit. Working with my new, shortened swing, I found that I was hitting the ball a lot straighter, and my scores were starting to drop. Little did I know how well I was going to play in my next tournament.

Our next tournament was in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina and is the best tournament that our team goes to. It was highly competitive with over 30 teams in the competition. We played two different golf courses in a span of 3 days. I was very excited about playing one particular course because it was very short compared to a normal course that we play. I felt like I could shoot in the high 80's on that course and play well enough for the team. The first day of the tournament we played the tougher of the two courses and I shot a 98. I wasn't extremely happy about that score but I kept my head up because I started the round sluggish and ended up playing the back nine very well. I shot 53 on the front and 45 on the back nine. I knew that if I played the other course this well, I was in for a low score.

The second day I came out firing. I knew I was playing extremely well as soon as I hit the first ball of the first tee. I managed to play very well and shoot 43 on the front nine and then came



Libby Fulford provided one of the season's highlights for the NCWC softball team, tossing a no-hitter in a 2-0 victory over Averett on April 9. The sophomore walked four and struck out 11 in the game. During the season, Fulford won 13 games and posted a 1.78 ERA. She was a second team All-USA South Conference selection for the Bishops, who made it to the semi-finals in the conference tournament and compiled an overall record of 20-18 and a conference mark of 6-8. First team all-conference honors went to first baseman Courtney Tucker (a team-leading 37 RBIs), while shortstop Ashlee Bass and designated hitter Kari Supple joined Fulford on the second team.

the back. I played the back masterfully (in my eyes) and shot a 40 on the back nine for a total score of 83 on the day. That's right, an 83. I felt extremely happy with myself and the day was sealed when I nailed a 20 foot putt to par the final hole for the 83. Even Anthony looked like he was going to pass out when I told him what I shot. But that score wasn't enough for me because I knew I could do better on that course.

The next day I came out playing even better than the day before and was on my way to shooting a better score until I played the 17th hole, my eighth hole of the day. I made a huge mental error and had a two stroke penalty put on me for hitting my golf bag with the ball I was playing with. I shot 46 on the front and 45 on the back. I wasn't happy about my score and knew I could do better, but I kept my head high because I was playing very well again and knew that without to mental errors during the day it could have easily been an 82.

I was looking forward to playing in the team's next two tournaments, but that did not happen due to a lack of interest from the rest of the team. Anthony was able to participate in both of them as he should for being the number one player, but I would be lying if I were to say that I didn't want to be out there playing. I have played a few times at the team's home course and I'm still hitting the ball solid. I look forward to playing the full season next year with new recruits and hopefully Anthony. Next year's goals: average under 90, no rounds in the hundreds, and beat Anthony in one round at a tournament; we'll see how that goes.

Anthony DeGregorio's Analysis: Trevor had a good season and has improved on a lot of aspects of his game, but he still has a way to go to becoming a complete college golfer. He should seek Professional help this summer on his swing and try to take full swings. But his confidence is back because he knows he can play well again. I look to see him shoot consistently in the 80's next season and be a solid contributor to the team.

Baseball from pg. 1

"We'll need to put all our effort into every game," said freshman Tyler Goarck. "Every game will be a must win."

Before the USA South championship, the Bishops had lost five of their previous seven games to finish second in the regular-season standings.

Then the Bishops turned up their intensity. In the opening round, Ben Pearson set the tone with a four-hit, six-strikeout complete game, as the Bishops beat Averett, 3-0. In the second game, NCWC defeated Shenandoah, 6-5, and in the semi-finals, the Bishop bats awoke in a 16-10 drubbing of Methodist, the regular season champion.

In the title game, the Bishops trounced Greensboro, 16-0.

Outfielder Chris Pecora, the tournament's Most Valuable Player after collecting 10 hits, led off the first inning with a single to left, and later scored on a two-run homer over the right field fence by Matt Smith to give the Bishops an early 2-0 lead. That was

really all that was needed, as sophomore hurler Kyle Robertson pitched a complete game one-hitter, while striking out five.

All-tournament honors were given to (1B) Mark Wooten, (2B) Ryan Snyder, (OF) Pecora, (DH) Kenny Flythe, (P) Pearson and (P) Robertson.

With its 27-16 overall record, the team perhaps isn't in the same league as NCWC's last World Series champ, which won 42 and lost 9. But Long likes the current blend of pitching, speed and timely hitting.

"Our pitching has been excellent. That's been the key to our success," Long said, noting that the staff has "kept us in a ton of tight games. I can't think of but a few games where we got blown out and didn't have a chance to win."

While acknowledging that the pitching has been strong, Rice complimented the team's hitters. The Bishops hit only 12 homers during the season, but got plenty of timely hits from the likes of Snyder, who has spanked 22 doubles, giving him an outside

chance at breaking the school record of 27.

Long pointed out that two major contributors to the offense—Flythe and outfielder Luke Williford—came to NC Wesleyan as football recruits. "I'd like to thank Coach (Jack) Ginn for that," Long quipped. "Kenny has had some big hits, and Luke is a burner."

The coach added that Williford, together with Pecora and third baseman Rob Johnson, have "put extra pressure" on other teams with their speed, laying down bunts, beating out infield grounders and stealing bases. Pecora and Johnson have racked up more than 60 stolen bases between them.

"Speed kills," Goarck noted.

Many players feel that a big part of their success derives from the team chemistry, which was strengthened during a trip out West to compete in the Greater Phoenix Collegiate Tournament.

Both Rice and Goarck described the bonding experience that the team had during the trip.

"It was the best time I have ever had on the baseball team" said Rice who talked about getting to see Bank One Ballpark, home of the Arizona Diamondbacks.

"For some of the guys, this was their first time on a plane" said Goarck. "It was a great experience and another step to growing as a team and preparing us for the conference tournament and now regionals."

Since returning from the conference tourney in Burlington, the Bishops tallied a home victory, 9-6, over Lynchburg College on April 18th.

Long said that his team is healthy for the playoff run. He thinks the break between the conference tournament and the regional competition has given Rice and his other workhouse pitchers "time to refresh." His starting rotation will consist of Rice, Robertson, Pearson and Ben Moore. Sean McIntyre is set as the fifth starter.

Said Long, "I hope we're peaking at the right time."

(Decree sports staff contributed to this report)