

SPORTS

Wesleyan Football Clinches NCAA Playoff Berth

Bulletin: The Bishops spanked the Greensboro College Pride, 55-14, on Saturday, to finish with an 8-2 overall record after losing their first two games, both non-conference match-ups, to begin the season.

In its fourth year of existence, the team claimed its first USA South title, winning all seven conference games and scoring more than 50 points on three occasions and more than 40 points three other times.

The Bishops will face Washington and Jefferson College Saturday afternoon in Washington, Pa. in the opening round of the NCAA Division III playoffs.

**By James Randolph
Decree Staff Writer**

The Wesleyan football team clinched an NCAA playoff berth with a 24-17 win against divisional rival Ferrum College on November 3.

Though the parking lot appeared full, there was more than enough space for the kids to run up and down the bleachers. The facility grounds seemed languid of energy, ironic for a game where one team was on the verge of clinching a divisional title. By the start of the fourth quarter, however, the bleachers and the sidelines were as lively as in any professional contest as students, parents, faculty, and fans cheered for their home team Battling Bishops.

The Bishops went up early in the game, holding on to a 17-10 lead at the end of the first half. Less than inspired play from the Bishops' offense allowed the Panthers back into the game and led to an intense nail-biter fourth quarter.

On a second-down play that was nullified due to a penalty, #27 Quentin Pope anticipated a post route to make a leaping interception. On the following second-down play, Pope anticipated the same route and made another interception to cap off an impressive defensive stand by the Bishops.

Pope earned the USA South's defensive player of the week award for his outstanding performance, which included his interception, two forced fumbles and six tackles.

The defense undoubtedly carried the Bishops team, forcing five turnovers in all, one which placed the offense inside the Panthers' five yard line resulting in the only Bishops score of the second

half - a 1 yard touchdown run from running back Bryan Haywood. Late in the fourth after four consecutive botched possessions by the Bishops' offense, each netting 20 yards or less, the defense dug in their heels again and took it upon themselves to stop the surging Panther offense.

A touchdown pass by Ferrum quarterback Matt Dobson ended the Bishops second-half shutout with seven minutes left in the fourth quarter. The Bishops' defense in the second half was still nothing short of heroic. Out of seven Panther drives that penetrated the Red Zone, the Bishops allowed only two scores.

Even after several impressive stands from the defense, the offense still seemed to lack exuberance. Wesleyan defensive back Devon Whitaker of the Bishops team paced up and down the sideline screaming "do y'all want a ring?" in an attempt to inspire vitality amongst his teammates. By the end of the game, however, energy was not an issue for the Bishops as they were awarded the USA South title and the gratification of a seventh straight victory.

NCWC 42, CNU 32

A week earlier, NCWC spoiled Christopher Newport's 2007 Homecoming with a 42-32 victory at Pomoco Stadium, snapping CNU's 20-game league winning streak at home and gaining sole possession of first place in the USA South in the process.

The game marked a milestone in the team's four-year history. "It's the first big win, where we were not the underdogs," said head coach Jack Ginn. "We didn't sneak up on anyone

Saturday. It's good to see that our players can handle that."

Ginn said that his team was confident prior to the game, even with



Teron Bush (pictured) and fellow running back Bryan Haywood have combined for 1,500 yards rushing this season. Sports Information Photo

CNU's success at home. "Our players knew they could win, and expected to win," he said. "When you enter a game at CNU, with their history of success, I think that confidence is a big part of it."

Assessing the keys to the Bishops victory, he added that his team protected the ball well and forced critical turnovers by the Captains.

The Bishops struck first, marching 80 yards on 17 plays on the opening drive of the game. The drive culminated in Steve Burant's 16-yard touchdown reception from Cedric Townsend with 7:35 left in the first.

Christopher Newport (5-3, 4-1) evened the score at the end of the first quarter on Jesse Bradshaw's 70-yard

touchdown reception from Todd Faison.

In the second quarter the Bishops out-scored CNU, 14-3. Teron Bush scored the first NC Wesleyan TD of the quarter on a 24-yard TD strike. The second came on Bryan Haywood's 1-yard plunge with 6:03 left in the half. Between the touches, Graham kicked 27-yard field goal for the Captains.

In the third, each team scored once. Townsend's 10-yard scamper gave the Bishops a 28-10 lead, but the Captains responded on Tunde Ogun's 3-yard score with 4:11 left to cut the lead to 28-17.

Early in the fourth, Burant caught his second TD pass of the afternoon to extend NCWC's lead to 35-17, this time on a 10-yarder from Townsend. The drive was set up by senior Justin Augustin's 51-yard run after a forced fumble and recovery.

But CNU came back with back-to-back touchdowns. Ogun scored his first from one yard out and Faison's second TD pass was a 25-yarder to Bradshaw. Ogun converted on the two-point conversion, and CNU trailed, 35-32.

On the Bishops ensuing drive, senior wideout Noah Parsons hauled in a Townsend pass inside at the 10-yardline that set up a fourth-and-short situation. Townsend got just enough yardage on the keeper for the first down to keep the drive alive. He later scored from 11 yards to seal the win.

Townsend carried 20 times for 103 yards and two scores. He completed 15 of 26 passes for 215 yards and three touchdowns. Linebacker Bo Brown spearheaded the Bishops defense with a game-high 13 tackles.

(Sports Information contributed to this report)

Young Volleyball Team Meshes in Successful Season

Newport News, VA - North Carolina Wesleyan's volleyball season ended November 2 as the Bishops fell 3-0 to top-seeded Christopher Newport in the 2007 USA South Tournament Semifinals.

Game scores were 30-13, 30-19 and 30-25.

The talented Captains tallied 51 kills as a team and a .269 hitting percentage in beating the Bishops. CNU then defeated Greensboro, 3-0, to claim the conference title after posting a 31-6 overall record.

"I told my team that I was impressed with the way they handled the match," Coach Robin Pietryk said. "We struggled from the beginning against CNU, but the girls kept cheering and stayed together as a team."

Wesleyan finished the season with a 21-14 overall record—Pietryk's second 20-win season—and an 11-7 conference mark. The Bishops qualified for the semi-final round by defeating Ferrum, 3-0, in the quarterfinals.

Pietryk attributed the improved record—last year the Bishops were 12-19 over all—to enhanced team depth, which allowed her more options when it came to making substitutions at key moments in the match. "We had quality players at all positions," said the coach.

The Bishops entered the season with 11 freshmen and only three veterans: senior Caitlin George, junior Sydney Bens and sophomore Brittany Insley. As a result, coach and players alike worried that the team might take a while to mesh.

In the first weeks of practice, Insley said, the team "was a little shaky. But once we started playing games and competing, we really got a lot of confidence and saw that we had talent. We knew we were going to have a decent season."

After a 2-3 start, the team won seven of its next nine matches. "Once we got used to playing with each other, the team really began to click," said George, who teamed with younger sister Kelly, a libero, to play an instrumental role in this year's success.

The CNU match marked the end of captain Caitlin George's career at Wesleyan. With 12 assists and two aces against the Captains, George finished with a four-year total of 3,927 assists (1st all-time) and 269 service aces (2nd all-time). In 2007 she set a school single-season record with 1,260 assists.

Pietryk said that she will miss the intangibles that George brought to the team, such as her work ethic and tenacity. "Caitlin is a hard-working player, who pushes to the very end of the match," Pietryk said.

During her four years at Wesleyan, George impressed her coach with her ability to run an offense. "She's a very smart player, which makes her very dangerous to the opponent," said Pietryk, who noted that finding a new setter is one of her top recruiting priorities in the off-season. "Caitlin could always make plays" out of passes that seemed "impossible to handle."

Bens agreed with her coach's assessment. "She always sees the game very well and she's a very consistent setter," she said, noting that it will be difficult to replace her.

Insley and Bens praised George's leadership skills and positive attitude, crediting her with the team's strong chemistry. "We really fed off each other the past two years," said Insley, a sophomore who became the first Wesleyan player since 1997 to earn first-team all-conference honors after establishing a school record with 539 kills.

Despite losing George to graduation, the team is optimistic about next season.

"We established a name for ourselves," Insley said. "Now we just need to keep pushing to get better as a team."

Added George, "The team should have really high expectations for next year."

(Sports Information contributed to this report.)

Speak Your Mind: Is Boston Top Sports Town?

**By Anthony DeGregorio
and Trevor Seibert**

AD: How about my Red Sox! Who would think that Boston would become this nation's sports capital?

TS: Beantown has provided plenty of excitement this season in all sports. The Red Sox are kings of the baseball world. The Bruins have started quickly and the Celtics are favorites in the East. The Patriots (CHEATERS) are playing better than anybody in football, and Boston College has a leading Heisman Candidate in Matt Ryan, who has the Eagles' hoping for a National Title bid.

AD: What do you think about the Eagles' chances of a National Championship? Even if they finish the season with one loss, shouldn't they get a chance?

TS: One loss will ruin the chances of Boston College going to a National Championship. They're going to have to finish the season undefeated and even then I don't like their chances of winning it all. The Eagles play in a weak ACC Conference and the weak schedule will hurt them in the end. Ryan still will win the Heisman, however, after his stunning comeback against Virginia Tech.

AD: I agree with your statement about Ryan. He's the most ready of any college quarterback to play in the NFL. But I'm not sure why you consider the ACC as a weak conference. The only conference better in my mind would be the SEC. As of right now the ACC has four teams in the top 25, not including Virginia, which leads the coastal division at 7-2 and is 4-1 in conference.

TS: Top to bottom the ACC has to be considered the weakest. Look at UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke and NC State (which just beat Virginia). The bottom of the ACC is a joke, period. The SEC and the PAC-10 are stronger than the SEC, and I still think that despite the struggles of the Big 10, it's a better conference.

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George Sisters Set High Standard

**By Trevor Seibert
Decree Sports Editor**

Kelly George never really had a choice when it came to her decision to choose a college. It's not that she didn't want to come to North Carolina Wesleyan College to play volleyball; it's just that her sister, Caitlin, wanted her to play for the Battling Bishops during her senior year. Kelly chose to come to NC Wesleyan and the two helped produce one of the most successful volleyball seasons in recent memory.



Caitlin George Sports Information Photos

Although the two never played together competitively in high school, Caitlin knew her sister would have an immediate impact on the Bishops' squad. "She's a good player," Caitlin said. "She's very good at what she does. She helps me out on the court tremendously. She made a big difference this season and I knew she would." Kelly certainly performed up to her sister's standards. Kelly led

the team in digs this season with 501 - the third most of any player in NC Wesleyan history.

Both agree that having each other on the court has a lot of benefits. "I know that she's going to perform well for the team," Kelly said. "She helps me calm down when I need to." Caitlin looks to her sister for support when she needs to blow off steam during the match.

Kelly - a libero - was able to learn the offense and defense of the team a lot more quickly because of Caitlin. Caitlin has left her legacy at NC Wesleyan and Kelly said that it provides motivation for her to perform to the best of her ability. "I look up to her and hope that one day I can make a name for myself," Kelly said. "I want to be known as Kelly and not as Caitlin's little sister."

Caitlin thinks that Kelly will not have a problem having a similar career to Caitlin. "I would never bring (Kelly) into a situation where she would fail," Caitlin said. "I knew she would come in and start and contribute to the team immediately, and she did."

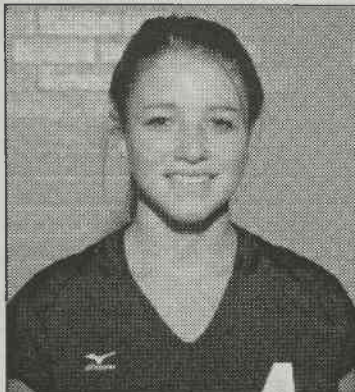
The two do have their quarrels on the court, but usually the battle does not last very long. Both remembered a match during the season where the two "went at it" in a huddle, but were laughing with each other just 10 points later. The two resolve their differences quickly and are close friends off the court.

Caitlin points to their extreme competitiveness as one of the reasons the two get into fights sometimes. "I expect a lot," Caitlin said. "I expect a lot out of the people I play with. Hopefully, they will be playing well

and play to the best of their ability. She knows I'm just trying to get the best out of everybody."

Kelly hopes that in a few years she will be able to play a lead role, like her sister did for the team this year. She added that she isn't quite as outspoken as her sister, but Caitlin quickly cut in. "She knows what she is talking about out there," Caitlin said. "She knows what's happening on the court. She'll be fine."

The two remain friends off the court. Kelly confides in Caitlin and Caitlin



Kelly George

is able to stay focused and entertained with her younger sister around. But soon, Caitlin will graduate and her sister will be left behind next season as a sophomore. Maybe, she'll be setting records of her own. Maybe, she will be remembered as Caitlin's little sister. But just as there will always be twelve months in a year, the two will remain close friends, sisters, no matter what the field of play is.