

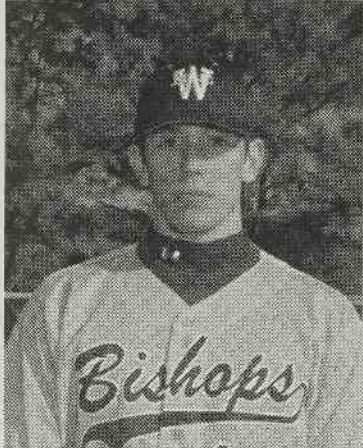
SPORTS

With Speedy Lineup, Long's Team Seeks Return to NCAAs

By Decree Sports Staff

Charlie Long enters this 11th year as NCWC's head baseball coach with an overall record of 258-184-1 (.584). He's led the Bishops to three conference championships.

Last season, a year after winning the conference tournament and earning



Chris Pecora Sports Information Photos

a trip to the NCAA Division III Final Eight, Wesleyan finished 28-16 overall, 7-5 in the conference. It was eliminated by number-one seeded Methodist in the conference tournament.

In late January, The Decree sports staff conducted an e-main interview with Long on his team's prospects for the coming season.

Q: First talk about the players you lost to graduation.

A: Blake Rice, Ben Pearson, Nathan West, and Mark Wooten graduated last season. Blake and Ben were our number 1 and 2 starters on the mound and gave us quality starts every time out. Nathan

and Mark were four-year starters in the infield. Nathan set a school assist record at short and Mark was a big force in the middle of our lineup.

Q: Who are the key returnees from last season?

A: Our key returnees are Matt Smith and Chris Pecora. Chris and Matt are two of the most talented players ever to come through our program. Matt is on pace to set the school record for hits in a career. Defensively, they bring a great deal of speed and stability to our outfield. Our outfield spots and second base are pretty well locked down. Third base should be decided early. We have a couple of freshmen competing at short, and first base is wide open. We have two very good options behind the plate.

Q: Talk about the newcomers.

A: I am excited about our entire recruiting class. We have three left-handed pitchers, Justin Diener, David Krasnowiecki, and Max Knowles, that give us tremendous depth on the hill. We also have depth in the outfield with Thomas Sykes, Brad Taylor, Tony Whitehead, and Daniel Moore. Justin Rahm, Andrew Webb, and Jason Gay will also help us in the infield, as well as Zach Alexander. The future looks really bright!!!

Q: How do you like your pitching going into the season?

A: Our starters will be Ben Moore, Kyle Robertson, Jon Lucas, Jonathan Shearon, Doug Roenker, and Justin Diener. I think that we will do some special things on the mound. As I stated earlier, it will be impossible to replace the consistency that Rice and Pearson gave us each time that they went out; however, as the freshmen mature, the possibilities look promising.

Q: Who are the teams to beat in your conference?

A: There are no easy teams in our league. The favorite of the coaches was CNU. I personally like Averett because they have a couple of lights-out pitchers. Methodist will always be good because they are the best coached team in our league. Shenandoah gets better and better every year and Ferrum is ranked number 20 in the country right now.



Matt Smith

Q: How important is it to win the regular season conference title?

A: The regular season title is nice but the big prize is the conference tournament. If I have my choice, we will win both; however the conference tournament gets us in the NCAA playoffs without any help from voters.

Q: What are the keys to success for the season?

A: The keys to our success this season will be health and forcing our style of play on the opponent. Health is a key because our #1 and #2 starting pitchers are coming off of injuries and you never know when discomfort might reoccur. Forcing our style on others will give us success because of the constant pressure it puts on the pitcher and the team's defense. If we disrupt a team's rhythm with our aggressive play, we will put a bunch of runs on the board. Our style will be aggressive and exciting. We have six or seven athletes that can fly and we will make every effort to make good use of their talent. We will steal a lot and use the hit and run to keep the defense on their toes.

Q: After going to the Final Eight in 2006, last year must have been disappointing. What was your overall reaction to last season? And what can your players take from last year and apply to this coming season?

A: Last year was disappointing to a degree. Even though we played poorly, we were still able to capture a share of the league title. I was very proud of the group, especially the seniors, who helped us reach this goal. We had several health issues that held us back last year and lost focus at points in our season. I hope that the team realized that we cannot just show up and automatically win just because we had gone to the Series the year before. I am sure that we expected the journey to be easier. That is one thing that I remember most about our teams that went to the Series three years in a row (1997-99). Each year, the determination grew stronger and stronger. I feel some of that determination this year in the juniors and seniors who got a taste of the Series in 2006.

Women's B-Ball Team Hopes to Improve

By Jade Johnson
Decree Sports Editor

The Battling Bishops Women's Basketball team hopes to improve on a dismal start this season.

In a recent home game against the Cougars of Averett University, the Bishops dropped the ball in a 49-36 loss. Wesleyan's record fell to 4-10.

Against Averett, Wesleyan led going into the break, with most of its points coming from forward, Cheyenne Hall. Averett took control in the second half, scoring 17 of its points off of 20 Wesleyan turnovers.

It was a game that saw four lead changes, as well as 9-26 shooting by the Bishops from the free throw line.

"If you look at the stats there is a glaring problem, our free throws," said Coach John Brackett. "These percentages are unacceptable."

In the recent Methodist game, the Bishops shot just 20 percent in the first half which led to a 36-20 half time deficit. While Guard Essence Chambers has been the spark for the Bishops all season, she was held scoreless in this match-up.

Nicole Williams was the team's leading scorer with 17 points, a season high for the sophomore guard. Freshman Gretchen Tobias managed to sink 10 points and grabbed 5 rebounds.

Men's Basketball Suffers Setback Against Averett despite Early Lead

It took just three seconds to send a frenzied Everett Gymnasium crowd into a silent state of disbelief.

With three ticks left on the clock, North Carolina Wesleyan's Trey Drake ignited Bishop fans with a game-tying jumper that was sure to send Wednesday night's USA South contest against Averett University into overtime.

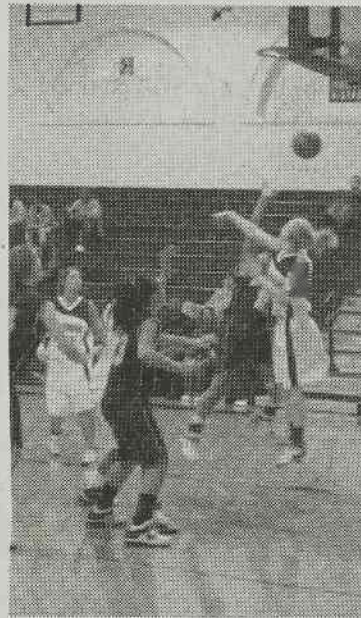
But fans were silenced when a foul was called against Wesleyan on a desperation three-pointer at the buzzer. AU's Jonathan Rumley stepped to the line and made his first attempt to give the Cougars a 72-71 come-from-behind win over the Bishops, who had jumped to an early 24-point lead.

The Bishops have now lost three conference games in a row since an impressive 123-88 victory over Christopher Newport on January 22. Its record stands at 1-4 in the conference, 8-9 overall.

An Averett win looked to be out of the question early in the game as the Cougars missed their first 19 attempts from the floor. Wesleyan's tenacious defense caused several AU turnovers and missed shots, while the Bishops were scoring at will.

Led by the hot shooting of sophomore Jarmel Arrington, Wesleyan raced out to a 27-3 lead at the 10:45 mark. Arrington scored 15 points in the half, knocking down 3-of-5 three-point attempts.

But the Cougars got on track midway through the period. Cory McDaniel converted AU's first field goal with 10:04 remaining, and Averett went on to out-score Wesleyan 21-8 over the next



Women's basketball team in action against Averett Photo by Penrod

On January 26 at Greensboro College, the Bishops struggled early in the contest only to rally hard in the second half with some quick jumpers and a few key free throws.

The Lady Pride of GC held off the attack to take a victory of 60-54.

10 minutes of play. NCWC took a 35-24 lead into intermission.

The second half saw the Bishops up their lead to 17 points at 44-27 on a lay-up by Buddy Williams with 16:26 left in regulation. Wesleyan maintained a double-digit lead for most of the period and led by 11 at 64-53 at the 6:06 mark. Two McDaniel free throws pulled AU to within nine, and the ensuing 15-4 run by the Cougars tied the game at 68-68 with 1:11 remaining.

Arrington made 1-of-2 free throws with 43 ticks left to put the Bishops back on top 69-68, but Rumley answered with a lay-up less than 20 seconds later to give the Cougars their first lead of the contest. A Rumley free throw with nine seconds left set the stage for Drake's game-tying 12-footer.

But Wesleyan's excitement was stifled when Rumley got the in-bounds pass, took a few dribbles past half-court, and after a pair of head fakes, launched a desperation three pointer from the right side. Then a wave of disbelief rushed through the crowd as the official blew his whistle to call a foul as time expired. Rumley made his first free-throw to complete the comeback.

The Cougars shot 50 percent from the floor in the second half and made 21 free throws to the Bishops' 12. Arrington led the Bishops with a game-high 23 points and team-high eight rebounds. Senior Jarvis Cobb tallied 16 points, while Lenny Hall had 10 points and four assists.

(Article courtesy of Sports Information)

Chambers led all scorers with 17 points for the game, Williams added 10 and Hall pulled down 11 rebounds.

Brackett stated that the team has been playing "very ugly basketball" as of late.

Even with Brackett's concerns, players seem optimistic about the future. Williams thinks the team needs to "get more consistent with rebounds and free throws."

Chambers feels that her play may be the boost that the Bishops have been looking for. "If I keep doing well on free throws, making my lay ups and playing off principles (fundamental basketball) we will improve."

Expanded Intramurals Offered in Spring

James Randolph
Decree Assistant Editor

In an interview last semester, Intramural Program Director Alex Langley reflected on the success of his past programs and discussed plans for new events in the current spring semester including a weekend softball tournament, a 5-on-5 basketball tournament, 4-on-4 flag football, and even a kayaking trip.

"I want the spring semester to be bigger [and] better," said Langley who jumped out the gates by initiating several activities just days after the students and faculty returned from the winter break. "My goal is to give the students something to do [and] something to get excited about."

Now weeks into the spring semester, the intramurals director has already started several programs including instructed workouts (group fitness program) on Monday and Thursday from 5:30pm-6:30pm and a volleyball league.

Langley has scheduled the first basketball match for the week following spring break.

The kayaking trip which Langley has all but completely finalized is expected to have spots open for 30 students. Other than that, there is a softball tournament which is still being planned, the billiards tournament, and perhaps even a weight-lifting event.

Of course, Langley is not quite yet out of ideas and has other plans he has yet to pencil in on his calendar that is all but filled up; he even encourages students to pass on ideas. He said "I'm always looking for new things; if you have something you want to do or anything you're interested in trying, let me know...my door is open."

February 22nd is National Recreational Sports and Fitness day. Langley expects to facilitate some group fitness event to commemorate the holiday including a T-Shirt give-away.

(See pg 4 for schedule information)

Hard Work Leads to Award For NCWC Nose Tackle

By Jarad Brown
Decree Sports Writer

In a season full of firsts for the Bishops football team, sophomore nose tackle Leeron Boykin added another one by garnering All-American accolades for the 2007 football season.

An honorable mention selection, the Warsaw native is the first player in NCWC's short football history to receive the award.

Boykin's journey was the result of hard work. "I mean, it was running in 100 degree weather with sweat dripping down your face, and lifting so hard in the spring I could barely walk to class the next day," said Boykin. "To me, this award just means that all of my struggles and hard work have been paid

Frosh Forward Named NCWC's First Soccer All-American in 20 Years

Freshman Marco Kirsch has been selected a Division III All-American by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America and D3Kicks.com.

Kirsch, a First Team All-Region and All-Conference selection in 2007, becomes the sixth Bishop in history to garner All-American accolades and the first since 1988. He was one of five Bishops to earn All-South honors and became eligible for All-American status as a First Team selection.

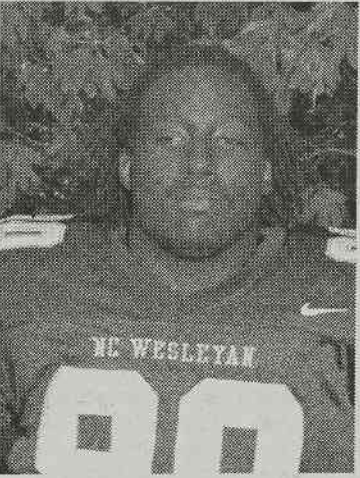
Kirsch put together a stellar year that saw him net 15 goals, including six game-winners, en route to USA South Rookie of the Year and Third Team All-American accolades. He finished the season with the third most points in NCWC season history with 44, while his 14 assists placed him second among season leaders.

(Article courtesy of Sports Information)

off. It's seven months of hell turned into heaven."

The award means more to Boykin than just a new trophy; it's vindication. It vindicates both his mother and himself. "Off the field she's everything to me," he said. "She's my inspiration, I play for my mom."

His mother isn't the only source of inspiration on the field;



Leeron Boykin Sports Information Photo

much of his inspiration is internal. "I came from the supposed bad neighborhood and bad school and my whole life people told me I was never going to do anything, and I feed off of that," he said. "I enjoy proving them wrong. Now I've done something and that can't be taken away. It just proves that the kids that are in the same position I was in have a chance, and don't have to be stuck."

Boykin recorded 29.5 tackles, with 16 coming for a loss. While providing stout run defense for the Bishops, he tied for the team lead with four quarterback sacks for a total of 32 yards. He broke up one pass and recovered one fumble.