

SPORTS

After Impressive Season, Volleyball Team Eliminated By Averett

By Decree Sports Staff

Wesleyan's volleyball team saw a record-breaking season derailed by Averett University in the second round of the USA South Conference tournament, 3-2, in early November.

The Bishops had hoped to move into the finals against perennial powerhouse, Christopher Newport, the ultimate conference champion. The Bishops finished with a 26-8 overall mark that included a 15-match win streak.

Coach Robin Pietryk attributed the Averett loss in part to playoff jitters felt by her young team. "Averett had a lot more experience on their team with six juniors who have been in" the tourney, she said. "We're a young team with no experience in those big games. I think nerves played a key role in the match."

The Bishops had finished in second place with a 15-3 conference mark, with two losses coming at Christopher Newport in late September, and one at Averett in the regular-season finale. The Bishops advanced to the second round of the tournament with a 3-0 trouncing of Ferrum at home.

Pietryk was pleased with her team's overall play during the season and thinks the experience will be invaluable next year, when the team will again challenge CNU for conference supremacy. After the conference tourney, Pietryk said, "I told the players that I know it was a very disappointing loss, but that it had been a great season. They should be very proud of what they accomplished. I told them that we'd be back."

The Bishops will lose only one senior, co-captain Sydney Bens, to graduation.

One of Pietryk's off-season objectives is to find an outside hitter to replace Bens, who finished the season with 231 kills (944 for her career) and 282 digs (1,172). "Sydney has been a consistent and smart player for the last four years," the coach said, in acknowledging that the four-year letter winner will be difficult to replace.

The team will be led next year by junior Brittany Inley, a middle hitter who earned first team all-conference honors for the second consecutive year



Inley

after she established the school record for kills (1,083) in a career. Other key returners will include freshman Mackenzie Tingle (first team and conference rookie of the year), freshman Leslie Hassell (third team), and sophomores Kelly George and Barbara DeRatt, among others.

McCloud Heads All-Conference Winners in Women's Soccer

Senior Reva McCloud led Wesleyan's USA South all-conference honorees in women's soccer, grabbing second team accolades for the fourth time in her career. She led the Bishops with 26 points this season (6 goals, 14 assists), including three game-winning goals. Her 14 assists tie the program's season record set in 1993.

McCloud was joined on the All-Conference team by teammates Meredith Hester, Tori Tenner, Rachel Hernandez and Lauren Stearns. Hester and Tenner each were named to the third team, followed by Hernandez and Stearns as honorable mentions.

Men's Soccer Loses in Round Two of NCAAs

By Decree Sports Staff

Wesleyan's men's soccer team almost pulled off an upset in the second round of the NCAA tournament before it lost in a five-round shootout with Emory University in Atlanta.

The Bishops fell behind early in the game, but battled back to tie the score in the second half on a goal from freshman Owen White. The two teams remained tied through two overtime periods and then Jordan Edelman beat NCWC goaltender Alberto Faisca in the shootout to win the game. The Eagles outscored the Bishops 3-2 in the five rounds of penalty kicks.

"It was a horrible feeling," said junior forward Luke Oakley, "just to know that your season ended in a moment with one penalty kick."

Oakley said the team will try to use the experience as motivation for next year. Right after the game, he said, Coach Jason Kilby gathered his team on the sidelines and offered encouragement. "He told us to hold our heads high," Oakley said. "This is where it starts for next year, that we should take the momentum and carry it through next season."

Oakley and his teammates thought they might be a team of destiny. "To score with eight seconds left like we did against Virginia Wesleyan—I thought we had a chance this year," he said.

Forward Robert Ivanovich echoed his teammate's comments. "We felt like we had a lot of momentum going into the game (with Emory), especially after the Virginia Wesleyan game," he said. "We thought we had something special going. Sometimes it's your day; sometimes it's not. Sometimes you have the luck. We did with Virginia Wesleyan, but not with the penalty kicks against Emory. In soccer, you have to be good and lucky."

Against Virginia Wesleyan, in first-round action, the Bishops scored a dramatic game-tying goal to force overtime. Down 3-1 in the second half, the Bishops rallied to score twice in the last 15 minutes of regulation. USA South Conference Player of the Year Danny Persson scored an unassisted goal, his conference-leading 26th, and then Edgar Saldivar connected with eight seconds left, drilling a shot into the upper right hand corner of the goal after slipping past two opponents and then beating a third for a loose ball.

"It was unbelievable," Oakley said, adding that Saldivar shot wide on a similar scoring chance last year in the season-ending loss to Loras at home. "He made the same play and I thought, 'Oh, no. He's doing it again. Then he made it. I'll never tease Edgar about his goal scoring again.'"

White then sent 225 soggy fans into delirium when he scored the game-winner, a shot off the right post five minutes into OT. Persson assisted on the goal. White's 11th of the season.

Persson, a junior from Sweden, and White (England) were the team's leading goal scorers, joining Ivanovich and a contingent of international play-

ers named all-conference selections. Persson, and Benjamin Schmedes and Oliver Madejski, both of Germany, were named to the First Team, while White (England) and Christopher Helms (Germany) were on the second team, and Porir Gudnason (Iceland) was an honorable mention at goalkeeper.

In looking to 2009, Oakley noted that he is one of the five juniors who will provide leadership on next year's squad; the others are Pa Saloum Gai, Jimmy Pierce, Saldivar and Ivanovich, who was named to the all-conference first team. Unlike last season, when many key contributors were seniors, this year's team will not lose a single player to graduation, though some of

the international underclassmen may not return, Oakley said.

"Next year, our core is coming back," Ivanovich said. "There will be more returning players than any years that I've been here. In the last two years, it's been different team with every season. I think we'll get more done next year. We'll achieve more, just because of the experience more guys will have from this past year."

Oakley made an even bolder prediction about next year: "I think we'll win the NCAAs."

Bishops Win Conference Title

Playing rival Christopher Newport University for the second time in a week, the second-seeded Bishops claimed the USA South Conference

title with a 2-1 victory at home on November 8.

The two teams battled to a 3-3 tie the previous Saturday, giving the Bishops an opportunity to refine their strategy in the tournament.

Coach Kilby, noting that the Captains had played a lot of long passes to generate scoring chances in the previous match, urged his team to apply added pressure on CNU. "They're a direct team," Kilby said of CNU. "They play a lot of long balls. We wanted to put pressure on their backs and their wing players (outside midfielders), because they're the ones serving."

The strategy worked as the Bishops built a 2-0 lead on goals by Arkadiusz Trochowski and Stefan Hauksson. The Trochowski goal, a 10-yard blast, came in the 15th minute after a deft series of passes with Hauksson. "It was a really nice goal," Kilby said. "Ping ping ping. We like to play it quick, because it's hard to defend that."

The Bishops increased their lead with a goal in the 78th minute by Hauksson, who scored two in the tournament to earn MVP honors. The two scores represented his output for the entire season after injuries hampered the freshman in the early going. "He's really come on at the end of the season," Kilby said. "He's very aggressive and very fast."

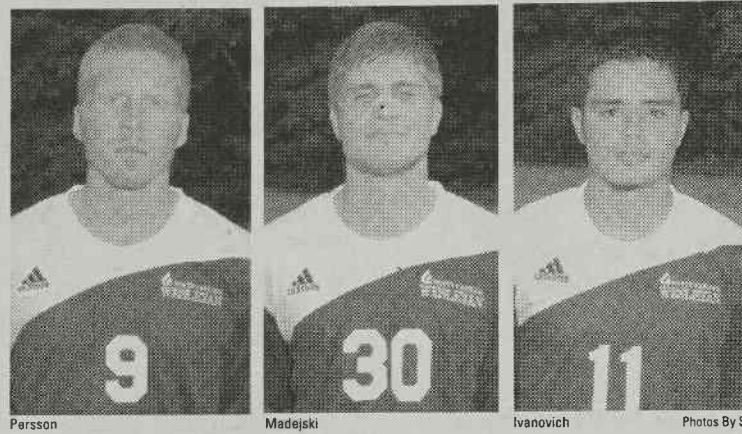
After Wesleyan's second goal, CNU fought back and produced numerous opportunities, but scored only one goal as Jimmy Hash tallied from 10 yards. The Captains out-shot the Bishops 13-7 in the second half, though the Wesleyan defense tightened in the final five minutes. Goalkeeper Fascia made several outstanding saves against a team that held an 11-2 advantage in corner kicks. "The corner kicks were very dangerous," Kilby said. "CNU has a lot of tall players capable of heading in goals."

Kilby admitted that his team got tired toward the end, adding "We bunkered down after two goals. They were coming at us. We were just trying hold on. It happens that way sometimes." The tournament title, just the second in school history, sent the Bishops to the NCAA tournament for the fourth time in five years. Last year the team finished the regular season undefeated before it lost to Greensboro in the conference semi-finals. It then earned an at-large bid, losing to Loras College at home in the round of 16.

Following the CNU match, Kilby said he was pleased with the way his freshmen-laden team coalesced over the season. Though the Bishops were often dominant, scoring at least five goals in eight matches, both Kilby and Oakley felt that the team under-achieved in some early-season matches such as a loss to Rutgers-Camden and then later against Greensboro on the road.

The coach pointed out that the many of the European players took time to adapt to the American collegiate style of play and, in particular, the rules for substitution. He explained that in Europe a team may substitute only three times during an entire match, which leads players to conserve their energy and play a less aggressive style. "I can make 30 changes in a game," he said. "Strategy-wise, in the European game, are you going to come out running like a deer? You can't put pressure teams like you can in the States. Some players are in there for 90 minutes. That's a lot of running."

Notes: Other Bishops on the All-Tournament team included Persson (two goals versus Methodist on Friday), Helms (one goal, three assists in tourney), and defender Gudmundur Palsson. The Bishops hosted the game against the first-seeded Captains because of a scheduling conflict caused when CNU's women's team won the regular season title and the right to host its tournament.



Persson

Madejski

Ivanovich

Photos By SI

On Fair Weather Fans

By Richie Fender
Decree Sports Writer

What can be said about sports fans? They are a very dedicated group, which suffers highs and lows with the teams they love to follow faithfully. Spending billions each year on sports related entertainment, fans feel they are part of the team and demand a lot from their investment. From merchandise to concessions, fans pour out money to over-priced pieces of their team.

Fan loyalty is so important to the sports industry that some teams go as far to employ "Customer Relationship Management" techniques to collect information about their fans. They gather information on demographics and psychographics of fans, and some have started using devices like loyalty cards, that are swiped through card readers at kiosks around arenas and stadiums. This way, the organization gathers much needed data on their fans while the fans collect reward points, which are redeemable against tickets, merchandise, and concessions. What a great marketing strategy.

I've been a Chicago Cubs fan and a Carolina Panthers fan all my life. Neither has produced a championship for me but that's okay; I still enjoy watching them and will never turn on either team. One thing I cannot stomach is a fan who turns on his beloved team when times are hard. These fans are known as "fair weather fans" or "band wagoning". These fans only show support when their team is doing well. Even during hard times, they skip to other teams that are doing better. These fans have no real loyalty to their "supposed" team. They vanish off the radar when their team shows the first sign of trouble. These fans only watch games that pique their interest or when it's championship time like The Super Bowl, The World Series, or playoffs in general.

Earlier this year after the New England Patriots QB, Tom Brady, went down with a season-ending injury, fans started stirring in their seats getting ready to jump. They knew they wouldn't have the same level of success with a quarterback, Matt Cassel, who hadn't started a football game since high school. While the Patriots were struggling, these fans got up and walked out in the third quarter. I'm not a Patriots fan by any means, but that disgusts me.

I've even seen fan loyalty dwindle right here in Bishop country. The football crowds were bigger last year when they were setting records and crushing the USA South conference. I look around now and see parents still cheering on their offspring but the handful of students who come are sitting there talking, giggling, and carrying on with no regard for the game. This is ridiculous and absurd. Show up because you want to show support for "your" team and don't flip flop when times are bad. This isn't politics.

True fan loyalty should continue even when the team that you support performs poorly year after year. Let's take the Chicago Cubs, which have tremendous fan loyalty. These fans spend their hard-earned dollar to support their team even though they haven't won a World Series in 100 years. This was "their" team and they deserved the best.

This loyalty was tested at the end of their playoff run this season. It seems 100 years may be too much for fans to stomach and some swear to never follow the Cubbies again. One fan even went as far to sell his "loyalty" on eBay (Item number: 140273969564). The seller, jerryb6hmm, said, "I can't watch the bleeding anymore. I'm a 30-year season-ticket holder and after this year I sold them!! You are bidding for my loyalty to the team of your choosing." Sounds like a great deal, right? The winning bidder will actually receive an official signed document from the seller swearing off his Cubs loyalty and stating that he will be a fan of whatever team you choose. Oh wait, there's more! He'll even throw in an autographed picture with the seller wearing the hat of your selected team with a "huge" smile on his face if you bid more than \$30. Well, what do you say to that?

I say it's repulsive! Just like I mentioned before, either be a fan or don't. Why waste your time to invest your heart and soul, part time. Being a fan should be a full-time commitment. You shouldn't lose sleep if things are going wrong either; it's just a game for some but an occupation for others. These athletes use our excitement to fuel their performance. It pains them when they look up and notice empty seats when games are going bad. As fans, we owe it to our teams to support them no matter what.