

## Elon's equestrian team proves successful despite underfunding

Christine Williams  
Multimedia Intern

Club sports are often overshadowed by varsity Division I sports. While this has been the case with the Elon equestrian club, it has not deterred the riders from doing what they love.

The equestrian club is broken into two different competitive categories — dressage, which trains horses in obedience and precision of movement, and hunter jumper, where the horses are trained to jump 3-foot fences flawlessly.

Founded in 2001 with only a few riders, the club has grown tremendously since its inception.

For both team divisions, competitions bring uncertainty. Judges make assessments on equitation — how the rider looks on the horse and how skilled he or she is as a rider. When riders arrive at a show, the horse they are to compete on is determined by drawing a name out of a hat. Riders do not bring their own horses, and they are not allowed to practice with the horse they are assigned.

"We have to ride all different types of horses and practice on every different type of horse because you never know what you're going to get to ride," said Sian Rucker, junior co-captain of the hunter jumper division. "The belief is that any good rider can ride any type of horse and do well on it."

The club competes in four shows a semester, with mandatory attendance in order to move on in hopes of making it to Nationals.

Elon's team competes against schools in the Southern Conference, as well as larger schools such as Virginia Tech, who receives more funding, because it is officially a Division I varsity program.

Despite being one of the smaller programs competing, the Elon team had a third place finish in the region behind Virginia Intermont College and Virginia Tech this year.

The equestrian team is considered a club sport, which can be difficult when competing against the Division I schools.

"A lot of money is coming out of everyone's pockets to be able (to compete)...I don't think (Elon) realizes how much money other schools get and how much more of an advantage they have because of that," Rucker said.

Even though it is only a club sport, the equestrian club at Elon provides any opportunity for those who want to ride.

"For people like us, riding is such a big part of our lives that we are going to go to school where we can do that," Rucker said. "For Elon to provide the equestrian team is important because many more student will want to come here for it."

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Jump fences and experience the equestrian team first-hand in this exclusive video.



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## SPORTS BRIEFS

### Athletic Department announces 2010-2011 award winners

A slew of awards were handed out May 9 in Alumni Gym, recognizing outstanding athletic, scholastic and leadership.

Presented since 1958, the Stein H. Basnight Outstanding Athlete Award goes to the most outstanding Phoenix male and female athletes of the year, according to the Department of Athletics' administrative staff.

Senior quarterback Scott Riddle and track and field standout senior Veronica Day were presented with the 2010-2011 Basnight Outstanding Athlete Award.

In his senior year, Riddle threw for 3,231 yards and 28 touchdowns to lead the Southern Conference. In his career, Riddle became the first quarterback in SoCon history to lead the league in passing for four consecutive seasons.

Senior Veronica Day ends her storied Elon career as a three-time SoCon champion and a nine-time all-conference honoree. Day holds Elon records in the long jump and triple jump. This past season, Day was honored as the SoCon Field performer of the year.

Senior guard Chris Long and senior second baseman Jackie Gonzalez were honored as recipients of the Robert C. Browne Memorial Sportsmanship Award, presented annually to a male and female athlete who have best displayed qualities of sportsmanship.

Long averaged a team-high 14.7 points per game in his senior year, and led the SoCon with 6.0 assists per game.

Gonzalez finished her Elon career, ranked third all time in Elon history with 206 career hits, and a .347 career average, fourth in school history.

### Women's track standout sets Elon record

Freshman Julie Hart set a new school record in the 800-meter run at the Dick Taylor Tar Hells Relays at UNC-Chapel Hill. Hart finished fifth after posting a time of 2:11.81.

### Phoenix softball players take home All-SoCon honors

Sophomore outfielder Tomeka Watson, freshman outfielder Carleigh Nester, and junior catcher Kaitlyn Piazzolla were named second-team All-Southern Conference performers. Additionally, Nester was one of 10 softball players from around the SoCon named to the All-Freshman squad.

As a freshman, Nester led the Phoenix with a .376 batting average and 15 doubles. In 164 plate appearances, Nester has struck out only six times in the 2011 season.

Watson heads into the SoCon tournament batting .356 with 12 doubles, one triple and four home runs. As an outfielder, Watson leads the SoCon with a perfect 1.000 fielding percentage.

Piazzolla has caught 10 out of 15 runners attempting to steal, tied for the third most in the conference. Additionally, Piazzolla is batting .319 with six doubles and two home runs in the 2011 season.

### Taylor picks up another Pitcher of the Week honor

Senior lefthander Lauren Taylor picked up her fourth SoCon Pitcher of the Week honor. Taylor went 1-0 in two appearances and finished with a 0.00 ERA.

Taylor previously captured pitcher of the week honors on March 7 and 14 and February 21.



## SPORTS

### Reactions to surprising starts in the MLB

Conor O'Neill and Christian Binder  
Sports Commentators

As the baseball season moves past the opening month and into the dog days of summer, some teams have emerged as exceeding expectations while others flirt with disaster. Which teams are you most surprised by so far this season?

#### Conor O'Neill

I'll start on the positive side by saying "How 'bout those Indians!" If you had told me before the season that Cleveland would be the second best team in the league by early May, I would have asked if you were still living in 1998. But the Tribe is on a roll, thanks to some pitching that I don't think can hold up. I'm not a big fan of the "quality start" statistic, but for the Indians' it is a number that I seriously doubt can hold up. Cleveland starting pitchers have recorded quality starts in 25 of 33 games. If this were a collection of veterans, of even half of the Phillies' rotation, I would say those are normal stats. But for a staff that features Justin Masterson, Fausto Carmona, Josh Tomlin and Alex White, I'm not buying the hot start.

#### Christian Binder

I think there's something to be said about teams that aren't contending at the moment, but have made vast improvements during last season, namely the Kansas City Royals and the Pittsburgh Pirates. The Royals rank in the top five of four major offensive statistics, led by an emerging Alex Gordon and a resurgent Jeff Francoeur. If Luke Hochevar could ever live up to his No. 1 overall billing, the Royals could be dangerous. The Pirates, on the other hand, find themselves hovering around .500, but their host of young stars such as Neil Walker, Jose Tabata, Pedro Alvarez and Andrew McCutchen will prove to be the core of a solid team in the next few years. Now, the Minnesota Twins have been extremely disappointing, but the real cause for

concern is how long Joe Mauer will be out and if he will be able to catch again.

#### Conor

The Mauer injury is a huge blow, and you have to wonder about how long he can be a catcher and compete for batting titles. Soon, the Twins will have to determine if his offensive production or defensive prowess is more valuable. For disappointing teams, I want to stay away from the Red Sox, and talk about another team whose winter moves had fans gushing. The Brewers are floundering in the depths of the NL Central, and this is a team that has a few superstars. While Ryan Braun, Prince Fielder and Rickie Weeks are producing runs, nobody else in the lineup — Casey McGehee, Carlos Gomez, Yuniesky Betancourt — can get it together. Combine that with lackluster pitching from starters, an injury to Zach Greinke and a shoddy bullpen, you have a recipe for the most disappointing team in the league and the beginnings of a firesale in July.

#### Christian

I think the Wilson Ramos deal is something that the Twins wish they could undo. Joe Mauer would fit in fine in that Twins outfield, but they no longer have exceptional catching depth as they did before they dealt Ramos. The Red Sox started the season off horrendously, but they have found their groove. I agree with you that the Brewers are by far the most disappointing team. They have all the pieces in place to contend, but they can't seem to click as a team. Yovani Gallardo has been awful and John Axford, a rookie sensation last year, has hit the sophomore slump in the biggest way. Prince Fielder has cooled off since his torrid start, but this team needs to turn it around fast before their window closes.

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