

Jensen's low-scoring golf teams have high expectations

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Two All-Americans. One 2004 Delaware State Amateur Champion. One seven-time ODAC Coach of the Year. Ten returning letter-winners. Two promising newcomers. One team. One goal: the NCAA Division III national championship.

Last year's win gave Guilford a league-record five-straight Old Dominion Athletic Conference (ODAC) championship titles.

All the players from last year's team have returned for another season. First-year Stephen Walton, who ranked in the top 32 of the 2003 United States Junior Amateur Tournament, and soph-

Coach Jack Jensen. "I expect this to be one of the five best teams we've ever had."

Twelve players made the team, while Franco Salmina, Charles Dean and Matt Nelson could not play due to limited resources at the practice venue. Guilford players practice free of charge at The Cardinal, a private golf course. As a business, it must set limits to its generosity.

"One of the reason we have had really outstanding teams is our relationship with the Cardinal," said Jensen. "It is a real blessing. That course is the real reason that we have done so well."

Four former Cardinal Presidents have been Guilford alumni.

A wonderful facility, however, is not a universal remedy. For Jensen there are problems - trying to keep all the players happy, as the top five play in a higher percentage of matches.

The five lowest-scoring players made the 'A' team. The next group of five players made the 'B' team, similar to a junior varsity team. Based on player performances, rankings can change as the season progresses.

However, when all the players are shooting low scores, there remains only a subtle distinction between teams 'A' and 'B'.

Wagner pointed out, "The top nine all average within three strokes of each other."

Walton agreed. "We have a lot of potential. At any day we could go out and compete with each other," he said.

"It's a strong line-up," said Jensen. "Every one of these guys is capable of being a number one player. And that tells us that we have a really strong team. There are no number four's and five's."

Walters said that the Guilford 'B'

team defeated mostly Division II teams as it won the Billy Joe Patton Intercollegiate men's golf tournament Sept. 14. Walton finished third, Wagner placed fifth, and junior Jeff Osberg barely missed all-tourney honors by placing sixth.

'A'-team veterans senior Dave Patterson, who is a three-time All-American, and junior Chris Lowman embrace the concept of a 'B' team. They believe that it is a great way, especially for players new to college golf, to gain experience.

"It sort of takes the pressure off of me. Let's say if I get hurt or something, I know a guy on the 'B' team can come in and play just as well if not better," said Patterson, who will play number two.

Rankings in golf are based on players' abilities and serve a purpose similar to that of batting lineups in baseball.

Jensen is excited at the return of Patterson, who did not play last year, to what was already a good team. A three-year veteran, Patterson shares a school record 18-Hole Score-66, with Bill Brooks and Keith King '85. With his experience, Patterson hopes to lead the team.

The team's depth testifies to Jensen's recruiting abilities.

"Recruiting is important. If you don't have good players, you're not going to have a good team," said Jensen. "Coaches can only do so much. I have never taught a kid how to play golf. It's all recruiting."

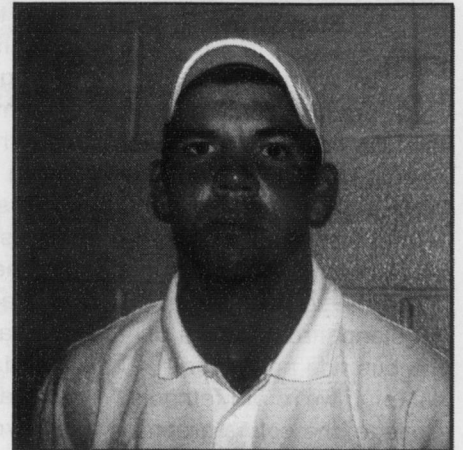
"Once your program gets to have a reputation, good players contact you, sometimes before you contact them," said Jensen.

In his 29th season with the college's golf team, Jensen is a former Guilford basketball coach. Under his guidance, the golf team has had 23 visits to national tournaments in 28 years and earned the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Championship in '88-89 and the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) Division III Championship in '01-02.

During Jensen's tenure, Guilford has also had four runner-up finishes in nationwide championships and a total of 15 ODAC championship titles.

Jensen admitted to playing favorites. His favorites make the team. "Do you know who my favorites are?" he asked. "Guys who shoot the lowest scores."

Lowman shares the team spirit,



KEVIN BRYAN/GUILFORDIAN

Returning senior Dave Patterson is confident in the abilities of both golf teams

which describes the team even in a competitive atmosphere. "I just want to get there as a team. It's so much better to do better as a team than as an individual in college golf," he said.

Jensen placed the team's strengths in perspective, explaining that the numbers ten and eleven players on this year's roster have played at two and three in years past. "It's exciting. The players all know that they are going to be good," said Jensen.

"Coaches don't talk like this. Normally, we down-play to avoid expectations. I know we're good. If we don't play up to it, I will be very disappointed," he said.

With spirits high, talent abounding, and the team practicing harder than ever, Guilford has a legitimate chance of repeating the '01-02 NCAA Division III title-winning performance.

"I just hope we can win it for Jack," said Patterson. "Jack has done so much for me. That's my main goal, to win one for him."

The 'A' team opens its season Sept. 20-21 at the Johnny Palmer/Uwharrie Point Invitational at Badin Lake, NC.☿



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Junior Chris Lowman's score of 162 helped the Quakers tie for 12th place at Johnny Palmer/Uwharrie Point Invitational on Sept. 21

omore transfer Blake Wagner add to the depth of the team.

Five players represent Guilford in most tournaments and shoot for the lowest score. Team score is the total of the top four individual scores and the team with the lowest combined score wins.

Sports Information Director Dave Walters said that the golf team has just finished a challenging qualifying season and determined the top players for the fall.

"The competitive qualifying rounds demonstrated the overall depth of the team," Walters said.

"Fall qualifying scores have been the lowest in the history of Guilford," said



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