

Guilford men's rugby: it's all about team

By Ryan Gordy
STAFF WRITER

It doesn't matter who you are. There is no experience required. There are no cuts. This is the Guilford Men's Rugby Club.

The Guilford website defines the rugby club as, "An inclusive association on campus, giving all comers an opportunity to continue their rugby playing, pick up a new game, get and stay in shape, and socialize in one of the most down-to-earth sports environments at Guilford College."

Senior players Andrew Slater and David Watters repeatedly echoed what the website offered, saying that players of all skill levels were welcome and would be respected.

"One of our main strengths as a team is that we really have a sound group of guys; we don't go through the motions," said Watters.

The team is comprised of former high-school rugby, soccer, football, lacrosse, baseball players, and wrestlers. The team doesn't just accept former athletes, the team "accepts people from every walk of life," according to the website.

The rugby team does not have a full-time coach because it is a club sport, but the team is coached by alumni and volunteers. They usually practice three days a week on the practice football field, depending on light and academics.

The team plays in the conference called the North Carolina Rugby Union, known as the NCRU. Instead of

calling the total number of games a season, it is called the matrix. This means the top three teams in the conference with the best spring matrix record attain a spot in the playoffs.

The rugby club is relaxed because academics come first, but that does not mean that they are not competitive. The Guilford rugby scene has improved dramatically the past two years because of the team's first winning conference matrix and its first undefeated season in recent history.

"What motivates me to stay on the team is everyone's hunger and desire to win," said senior Randall Aldana. "We made a commitment at the beginning of the season to this team to win it all."

"We have been putting in a lot of work and we have been seeing it pay off this season so far "The leadership on the team keeps us focused for improvement and victory," Aldana said.

The rugby team reached the playoffs in 2009 without a loss, but had to forfeit because of the numerous injuries the team accumulated. Last year, the rugby team showed potential in a rebuilding year but couldn't put everything together because of injuries and leaving team members.

This year, spirits are high.

"It all starts in the mind; we are going to make the playoffs," said Slater. "We are going to have a lot of soul to work and train hard as a team."

To be in a club sport requires dedication and motivation. For players, the team is the inspiration to endure the grind of the matrix.

"What motivates me is the responsibility I have to the

other guys on the team, whether it's being at practice or in the scrum," said Watters.

"The strength of our team is when everyone on the pitch is playing as a unit and sometimes it's hard to do that," said Slater. "The camaraderie of our team pushes us to do well; you got to love the people you play with."

The team currently has two wins and no losses and is looking to win more.

"The team stays motivated by winning," said sophomore Aaron Craig. "Winning boosts the morale of the team and we play more confident. Currently we're 2-0, so we're very confident right now; we're feeling good."

Another common theme is the life lessons that being on the team has taught them.

"Rugby has been a safe place for me to learn, grow, improve as a person, and as a member of a team," Aldana said. "Everything from the hard work, to the people you meet, things you learn, and skills you build in all areas have been a great experience for me."

"I started playing my freshman year, and I was pretty quiet and had a small group of friends," said Craig. "But, when I joined the team, I became more vocal, and I was introduced to more people through my teammates and I made a lot more friends."

In order to make it to the playoffs and regional, a team has to be consistent. That is why the rugby team is taking the matrix one game at a time.

"We're looking at this season by a one-game-at-a-time viewpoint," said Craig. "But, I'm looking forward to seeing how well we do and if we make it out of the group."



DARIN LANE/GUILFORDIAN

Sprinting into Spring

First-year **David Cason**, distance runner, and junior **Derick Kosgei**, middle distance, race across the North/South field during an afternoon track practice.

What's Going On in Guilford Sports...

LAST WEEK'S GAMES AND MATCHES

MEN'S LACROSSE

MARCH 16 GUILFORD 8 PLATSBURGH ST. 19

MEN'S TENNIS

MARCH 14 GUILFORD 1 WASHINGTON & LEE 8*

BASEBALL

MARCH 16 GUILFORD 10 ROANOKE 1*

WOMEN'S LACROSSE

MARCH 12 GUILFORD 13 SEWANEE 16

SOFTBALL

MARCH 16 GUILFORD 3 ROANOKE 11*

GUILFORD 1 ROANOKE 2

WOMEN'S TENNIS

MARCH 14 GUILFORD 0 WASHINGTON COLLEGE 9

UPCOMING GAMES AND MATCHES

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S TENNIS

MARCH 18 GUILFORD V CHRIS. NEWPORT

BASEBALL

MARCH 18 GUILFORD V ME.-FARMINGTON!

MEN'S LACROSSE

MARCH 19 GUILFORD V RANDOLPH*

WOMEN'S LACROSSE

MARCH 19 GUILFORD V BRIDGEWATER*

WOMEN'S LACROSSE

MARCH 19 GUILFORD V EASTERN MENNONITE*!

Key- *= ODAC GAME != DOUBLE HEADER HOME TEAM IN CAPS