

Volleyball team emphasizes team chemistry, sets new goals

By Rory Molleda & Millie Carter
STAFF WRITERS

The women's volleyball team is hoping to charge into the season with returning players and talented incoming first-years, to improve their ODAC finish from last year.

The Old Dominion Athletic Conference (ODAC) ranks Guilford sixth in the pre-season poll, tied with Bridgewater College. Their previous season ended with a 5-5 conference record and sixth place finish (16-13 overall record), but the team and coaching staff have high hopes that camaraderie and trust will unify the team and make for a great season.

Concerned mainly with the loss of Courtney Kozar, Brittany Freeman and Traci Teague, Guilford will be looking for new attackers to pass to, following the departure of their top three scorers from 2010.

"Losing those three, and then seeing what we have coming back, it is very realistic", said Head Coach Emily Gann. "Anyone can win the ODAC but a realistic goal to start with would be to better than what we were last year."

Team dynamics play a very important role in performance on the court. If any given team does not have trust between players they cannot realistically hope to have a winning season. With team chemistry, the Quakers can pull together and improve on their accomplishments of last season.

In order to realize their goals, leadership has to be present on and off the court. This year, Senior Taylor Phillips, one of the

team's leaders, will express that presence.

"If we achieve that team unity and are able to successfully play together, everything else will fall into place," said Phillips. "We are constantly getting better and working hard towards ridding ourselves of the mental and individual mistakes so they are

not being made during games."

Another obstacle the Quakers may face is merging together

experience on the court with new talent. Incoming first-years, although talented, may lack the experience required of fast paced, ultra-competitive collegiate level matches.

"We gained some quality hitters that will really benefit us offensively," said

sophomore Malika French. "Michaela (Wall)'s blocking abilities will be very helpful while Morgan (McKinnon) and Brittany (DeCesare) are both adding to the defensive aspect."

It is only a matter of time before they are fully acclimated to the speed and pressure that comes with conference games.

"I believe they are ready to carry the pressure that may be put on them," Phillips says, "and I am looking forward to seeing their growth throughout the year."

Despite having to overcome the loss of Kozar, Freeman and Teague, Coach Gann is hopeful for the season. Gann realizes that a competitive finish in the conference will be no easy feat, but is sure her team is ready for the challenge.

"It's going to be a battle," said Gann. "Anybody can win on any given day, and that is the mentality I'm trying to help this team believe in." Competitive collegiate-level matches.

"We are constantly getting better..."

Taylor Phillips, Senior

Women's rugby club builds strength and friendship

By Natalie Sutton
STAFF WRITER

On the fields where the women's rugby team practices, there is a sense of both intense resilience and friendly laughter. One thing that makes the Guilford College women's rugby team so unique is their combination of tough-yet-amiable attitudes.

Concerning the tough aspect of the women's rugby team, junior Hannah Fillingim, the "fitness captain," ensures that the team works out at the gym together on a weekly basis. Also, she leads the girls on 12-minute interval runs before practice. Their practice, which consists of running lines while passing the ball, doing drills, and scrimmaging, is anything but easy.

"It's a very physical sport and there's high risk of injury," said Fillingim. "We play for 80 minutes. You have to have good endurance. You have to have speed. It's a really challenging sport but it's rewarding."

Steven Moran, assistant director of student leadership and engagement, is faculty advisor for the women's rugby team. He understands the time and energy invest-

ed into the fitness aspect of the sport.

"They coach themselves and bring in trainers to work with them on strength and conditioning," said Moran. "Sometimes they bring in a coach from a semi-professional area team to work with them."

Although it is a very high contact sport, sophomore Emily Morazán is reassuring while encouraging other girls to join the team.

"We would love to have anyone, any size; you're not going to die," said Morazán. "We have a really amazing team. I love all the girls here."

As implied by Morazán's statement, friendship among the players is a huge part of women's rugby. Sophomore Kelsey Worthy, who has never attended a women's rugby match at Guilford, knew girls in her hall last year that joined the team and immediately felt welcomed.

"Although I've never personally been involved with the sport, I always got the idea that the women's rugby team is a very supportive community," said Worthy. "I would always hear about how easily all the girls bonded."

Another huge part of the women's rugby team is the ease with

which the team shifts from annihilating one another to becoming friends.

Junior Peach McCarty, team captain, discussed her favorite part of the game.

"We play against a team and try to kill each other on the field, but then we meet up afterwards and sing songs and have fun together," said McCarty. "It's totally this social thing. In other sports, you come with enemies; you hate the other team. But with (women's rugby) it's like, 'Oh, yeah. That team is really fun to socialize with; they're going to kill us on the field, but they're really fun.'"

Not only are the women rugby players friendly with opposing teams, but they're close with the Guilford men's rugby team as well.

"We're working with the boys this year more," said Morazán. "There's a lot more cohesion between the two teams. It should be a good season. There's been lots of improvement for both teams."

Morazán, who manages the financial side of the sport, is not the only team member who values having a close relationship with the men rugby players.

"We have a lot of camaraderie

with the men's rugby team," said McCarty. "They help us out when we need it. Also, we socialize with the guys all the time; it's really fun."

Moran, who has been the staff advisor since September 2010, was asked to choose one word to describe the women's rugby team. Without hesitation, he chose "awesome."

"The work they do to put together matches and organize practices, and the time and energy they put

into the sport is just awesome," said Moran. "They are fantastic and a ton of fun. They really work hard to represent the college well."

As for the team's future, the captain has big plans ahead filled with lots of tackling and ruffles.

"This year during Serendipity, I hope to come out and play rugby while wearing prom dresses," said McCarty. "It wouldn't be anything official, just a friendly game of rugby full of tackling people in prom dresses."



(Above) Hannah Fillingim, junior, toughs it out as she gets tackled during a drill. The women's rugby team practices six hours a week. (Left) Hannah Kennedy '11 gives pointers to Cappa Cheatham during a scrum.