

Matt Pawlowski attributes coaches, teammates for early season success



First-year quarterback **Matt Pawlowski** ranks third in passing completions and touchdowns in the ODAC.

BY L.A. LOGAN
STAFF WRITER

And the Old Dominion Athletic Conference Offensive Football Player of the Week and Guilford College Student-Athlete of the Week honors go to — first-year quarterback, Matt Pawlowski.

During that impressive week, Pawlowski totaled four touchdowns and led the Quakers to their first victory of the season.

As a respectful young talent, Pawlowski attributes success on the field to his coaches and teammates.

"Anything I do on the football field, I credit my coaches and teammates," said Pawlowski. "They've all helped me out tremendously, especially the offensive line."

Pawlowski is building quite a reputation for himself on the football field. The cool, calm and collected quarterback ranks third in passing completions (62), percentage (57.4), yards per game (226), and touchdowns (6) in the ODAC.

The newly declared sports management major has also earned respect inside the classroom from one of his professors.

"There are three kinds of people in this world," said Robert Duncan, visiting assistant professor of political science. "There's the kind of people who makes things happen. There's the kind of people who waits for things to happen. Then there's the kind of people who wonders what happened. Matt is the kind of person who makes things happen."

Instilled with his parents' strong values, Pawlowski has grown into a laid-back, soft-spoken leader.

"As a leader, I lead by example," said Pawlowski. "Whether it's running sprints hard, or producing good grades, I'm just a hard worker at whatever I do. Just because I'm laid-back and quiet doesn't mean that I can't be a great leader."

In an email interview Matt's mother, Kim Pawlowski, recalled how she and her husband raised their unique son.

"We always tried to stress to Matt that school came first and sports second," said Kim. "You can only get so far playing sports, but a good education will carry someone through life.

We also tried to remind him about how honesty and hard work will always pay off even if it can take a while. I think he has been able to see the results of that."

Before committing to Guilford, Pawlowski said Liberty University and the Virginia Military Institute were in the recruiting race, but he felt Guilford was the right fit.

"Guilford's coaches made it personal for me and explained they were going to help me progress throughout my years, which drew me in," said Pawlowski. "They know I can grow as a person and as a quarterback."

Entering the 2012 summer football training camp, Pawlowski battled his way to the top of the depth chart. Chris Kennedy, head sport performance trainer at Prohlfic Park, and Pawlowski believe that training at Prohlfic Park prepared him for the daily grind of the season.

"Matt is always faithful and committed to his work ethic," said Kennedy. "If he couldn't get any sleep in order to get in extra repetitions at lifting or throwing balls, I believe he would never sleep."

Before arriving at Guilford, Pawlowski started as quarterback every year since his freshman year at Northwest Guilford High School, not even a ten-minute drive from campus. Northwest Guilford Head Football Coach Joe Woodruff describes Pawlowski as an athlete with many intangibles.

"This kid wins games if he throws the ball forty times or five times," said Woodruff. "He finds a way to win. One other kid I coached is in the NFL right now as a quarterback. I'd be hard pressed to not take Matt over him just because Matt is such a proven winner."

Although he has won a lot of games in high school, Pawlowski remains levelheaded and continues to find ways for him and his teammates to get better every week. Pawlowski is optimistic about his first season and his future.

"Every game I approach I only think about winning," said Pawlowski. "When I leave this campus, I want to be known as a splendid student-athlete who helped expand Guilford's football program as well as developed into a distinguished learner with a bachelor's degree in sports management."

Professional athletes are throwing in the final towel

BY ELIAS BLONDEAU
STAFF WRITER

In Bruce Springsteen's classic song, "Glory Days," the singer references a friend in a bar who "was a big baseball player back in high school," but whose life is now so dull that all he talks about are his "glory days." In many ways the sports industry parallels this song with a majority of major athletes quitting at relatively young ages.

Last month, tennis superstar Andy Roddick announced his retirement at the age of 30, sending shockwaves through the sports world. When asked for the reason of this move by USOpen.org, he replied, "I just feel like it's time." He went on to cite inability to consistently take both the physical and mental tolls of the sport.

His decision, however, is not an uncommon one in the world of professional sports. While the span of time between 30 and 40 seems relatively young to quit, a look at the retirement rate among leagues proves otherwise.

With the exception of the NBA, in which the average retirement age is around 36, according to ChaCha.com, Roddick seemed to call it quits at a typical time for a person in his position.

Steve Yzerman, a former captain for the Detroit Red Wings, attributes the primary reason for most players retiring to the stress such strenuous activity places on the body.

"The only reason I retired was health," he told The Hockey News in a 2008 interview. "I loved playing the game and everything about it. If I could have remained healthy and trained and what not, I would've kept playing."

"I believe I owe it to the Cardinals and the fans of St. Louis to step aside, so a talented free agent can be brought in as the final piece of what I expect can be a world championship-caliber team."

Mark McGwire, former St. Louis Cardinals player

Renowned basketball great Shaquille O'Neal, who retired last year at 39, can vouch for this statement. Struggling with an Achilles injury, he pushed against his body in order to keep playing the game he

loved.

"Doc (Brian McKeon) kept telling me, 'No, no,' but I wanted to play so badly," O'Neal said to ESPN. "My feeling was, 'if it ruptures, it ruptures.' The Celtics were so good to me I wanted to do everything I could to get back on the court for them."

That drive to continue, with the body being the only shackle, is one that carries through all major sports, and has been persistent for years. Mark McGwire, famed player for the St. Louis Cardinals, expressed similar sentiments when he retired in 2001.

"I am unable to perform at a level equal to the salary the organization would be paying me," McGwire told the Associated Press in 2001. "I believe I owe it to the Cardinals and the fans of St. Louis to step aside, so a talented free agent can be brought in as the final piece of what I expect can be a world championship-caliber team."

"For years I have said my motivation for playing wasn't for fame and fortune, but rather the love of competing."

Fervent fans push for their favorite players to continue, using harsh terms like "quitter" to deride their choice to retire. This shows a complete lack of respect

for people they claim to idolize, and a misunderstanding of the motivations behind leaving a sport.

The strong emotions displayed in these interviews prove that players don't quit because they want to. They quit because they know their limits, and want to be remembered in the best possible light, immortalized forever in almanacs and trading cards.

Springsteen's song "The Wrestler" describes a "one-trick pony" whose only "faith is in the broken bones and bruises" he displays, not knowing when to call it quits. These athletes would rather be the subjects of "Glory Days," growing old and living vicariously through "boring stories" of days that passed by "in the blink of a young girl's eye."

Shaquille O'Neal continued playing basketball despite an Achilles injury, a common theme in major sports.

