

Guilford basketball athletes representing USA abroad

BY MAILE MUNRO
STAFF WRITER

"At the end of the day, we just want to win," said senior basketball player Jake Hopkins.

This sentiment is frequently heard from student-athletes at Guilford College, but Hopkins' comes from a distinct perspective.

Hopkins, along with junior guard Matt McCarthy and head basketball coach and director of athletics Tom Palombo, will represent Team USA in a series of overseas competitions from May 30-June 8.

They will travel with fellow collegiate student-athletes from the United States as part of USA Athletes International.

The trip includes five games in cities throughout Italy and Austria, as well as various cultural tours, such as a gondola tour of Venice.

After Palombo accepted the invitation to coach, he had some liberty to recommend players for the team and extended offers to players from the Old Dominion Athletic Conference, including Washington & Lee, Hampden Sydney and Randolph Macon players.

Previous Guilford athletes have taken advantage of this opportunity to play internationally through USAAI, including assistant basketball coach Caleb Kimbrough.

"He went over there and made a good impression as a Guilford athlete," said McCarthy. "The USAAI remembered that and, they've been offering more Guilford athletes that opportunity."

A large part of creating those opportunities is success here at home.

During his 11 seasons at Guilford, Palombo has made a habit of generating successful basketball players.

"We have had great success at Guilford

because of the leadership of our administration and the quality of student-athletes we have had in our basketball program," said Palombo in an email interview.

Quality athletes and quality coaches make a winning team.

Junior basketball player Will Koppenhaver said that Palombo is a really intelligent coach.

"He has a system," said Koppenhaver. "If you play well in the system, we win."

"Everybody plays their role and does what they're expected in the team aspect, and that's why we are as consistently successful as we are."

Integral to the system are the early morning workouts and two-a-day practices during the preseason.

Palombo's system has led Guilford's basketball program to two Division III Final Four appearances and an ODAC league championship.

To maximize the skills they work so hard to attain, the basketball team emphasizes teamwork and fostering a culture of cooperation among the players.

"Basically we're a family," said McCarthy.

"It's not fun to be up at six in the morning, but everyone has each other's backs."

"We all expect everyone to be there and pick each other up when we fall."

Players believe this culture of building each other up is essential to success.

"We always say we are family," said Koppenhaver. "When you're dying on the sideline trying to make a sprint ... everyone's helping you out."

And those who help each other out in practice help each other out in the game.

"If teammates have your back in the game then they will have your back for the rest of your life," said Hopkins.

Now, Hopkins, McCarthy and Palombo will take this family spirit and system of basketball abroad to compete and participate in a brand new international experience.



Senior Jake Hopkins (left) and junior Matt McCarthy (right) have been chosen to participate in a European competition to play for the USA team from May 30-June 8.

EILEEN MARTIN/GUILFORDIAN

INSIDE SPORTS

Assistant Coach Leaves



BY NICOLE ZELNIKER
STAFF WRITER

Day in the Life: Lax Bro



BY CHASE CLAUSEN
STAFF WRITER

STUDENT ATHLETES OF THE WEEK



E'LYNA GARCIA
SENIOR
LACROSSE
Vs. SHENANDOAH
(APRIL 26)



TANNER GROSS
FIRST-YEAR
GOLF
ODAC
CHAMPIONSHIP
(APRIL 29)



CYNTHIA HAYES
SENIOR
SOFTBALL
Vs. RANDOLPH-
MACON
(APRIL 27)

Scored five goals during the second half of Guilford's 16-11 win

Shot an even-par 72 to finish with a 52-hole 222

Closed her season going 3-for-4, hitting all doubles, with a league-leading-record double count at 23