



Photo by Craig T. Greenlee
Greg McClinton (11) was one of several first-year players who played meaningful minutes for the Deacons.

Baseball

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age (.375) and RBIs (26). Roberts, though, is on a hot streak. Prior to WSSU's road game at Catawba on Wednesday, he was hitting .370, which included 11 extra-base hits and 19 RBIs. During a recent 10-game stretch from March 15-25, the senior left fielder hit .433 (13-for-30) and drove in eight runs.

"Over the past few weeks, Des has really turned it on," said Ritsche. "Now that he's completely recovered from last season's hand injury, he's gotten his timing back."

Stand-out pitching propels WSSU. Ace right-hander Sam Burton (1.74 ERA) has given up 21 hits in 41 1/3 innings with 43 strike-outs and only 16 walks. Lefty Jordan Carlton has allowed 12 earned runs in 37 innings pitched (2.92 ERA).

Burton, who is 3-2, gets solid support from right-handers Eric Corlett (5-1) and Jordan Cummings (4-1 with 2 saves). Both have proven themselves as shut-down types coming out of the bullpen.

"Sam isn't the over-



Photo by Craig T. Greenlee
Rams outfielder Des Roberts is beginning to find his groove at the plate.

powering type, but he throws strikes," Ritsche said. "He has a nice curve and change-up, and he does a good job of spot-pitching with his fast ball. What makes Eric and Jordan so effective is their ability to throw off-speed pitches for strikes."

"Pitching has carried us all year. But we'll still make some changes with the back end of our bullpen and with who we put in the game as middle relievers. These tweaks will help us to bring in the right pitchers for the right game situations."

Team

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to a national title in 1988 and was the consensus pick as National College Player of the Year. He was an assistant coach on Kansas teams that advanced to the Final Four twice and won the national championship in 2008.

Now, it's his job to restore a Wake Forest program that had nose-dived in recent years.

Given Manning's results as Tulsa's coach, there's a tidal wave of optimism about the future for Wake Forest basketball. In his second and final year at Tulsa, he guided the Golden Hurricanes to the Conference USA tournament title and a second-round NCAA Tournament appearance. It was Tulsa's first trip to "The Dance" in 11 years.

As expected, the Deacons had plenty of lumps and bumps in Manning's inaugural season as head coach. An early ACC tournament exit mirrored what the season was like. At times, Wake Forest (13-19) showed promise. But there were far too many other instances in which Manning's squad self-destructed.

In a frantic stretch that lasted all of six seconds, Wake Forest's basketball season was laid to rest. The Deacons put together an inspired second-half comeback to bring the Greensboro Coliseum crowd to its feet. But it wasn't enough to prevent an 81-80 loss to Virginia Tech in the opening round of the ACC Tournament.

This loss was an especially difficult pill to swallow. Wake had genuine opportunities to pull this one out, but couldn't find a way to close the deal.

Down by 1 point with time running out, Wake power forward Dinos Mitoglou took a 9-foot jumper from the left side which bounced off the back side of the rim. Devin Thomas followed up, but his tip-in attempt was also off the mark. Codi Miller-McIntyre elevated above the traffic in the paint for another tip-in try, but his potentially-game-winning shot rimmed out at the sound of the final buzzer.

Game over. Season over.

"There was growth," Manning said. "The players are beginning to understand how important it is for us to establish effort and energy as a mindset. I liked what I saw in those games when we competed

and were locked-in defensively. But we didn't always do that every night. In order for us to be successful, we must play with emotion and intensity all the time."

The defense must also improve. Wake Forest ranked last in the ACC in scoring defense (72.1 points per game) and next-to-last in field goal percentage defense (.450). Bottom line: the Deacons couldn't stop anybody, especially at critical times during the late stages of games.

On the plus side, Wake Forest has four returnees who contributed and played meaningful minutes as first-year players. True freshmen Cornelius Hudson, Mitchell Wilbekin and Mitoglou, along with red-shirt freshman Greg McClinton (Winston-Salem Prep) will only get better as they continue to elevate their level of play.

Upperclassmen Miller-McIntyre and Thomas are primed to make the most of their upcoming senior seasons. Miller-McIntyre (14.5 points, 4.8 rebounds, 4.3 assists per game) was voted Honorable Mention All-ACC as a point guard. Thomas, a 6-foot-9 power forward (12 points, 8.8 rebounds per game) played well at times, but has struggled with consistency.

"Our young guys logged a lot minutes and they handled it well," said Manning. "The progress they made gives me confidence that we are moving in the right direction. Still, we're not moving nearly as fast as I'd like. But, we are getting there."

If Manning's signings from last fall live up to their four-star ratings, the Deacons will get immediate help for next season. Doral Moore, a 7-foot center, chose Wake Forest over Kentucky, Florida, Illinois and Ohio State.

John Collins is a prized 6-foot-9 power forward who had considered Miami, Kansas State, Alabama, Texas, Tennessee, Texasand Maryland. Point guard Bryant Crawford is a skilled 6-foot-3 playmaker/scorer who was heavily recruited by Georgetown, Southern Methodist, N.C. State and Tennessee.



Manning

Parkland

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The winter storms that caused area schools to shut down for nearly two weeks in late February, had a negative impact. No teams were allowed to conduct practices during that time. Aside from that, several Mustangs haven't been at full strength because of nagging injuries.

Katlin Sherman (sprints), Ila Mumford (long jump) and Nateja Hale (hurdles/long jump) have had to deal with ankle injuries in recent weeks. Ebony Williams, state indoor champ in the 55-meter hurdles and 300-meter dash is getting over a slightly strained groin which occurred in the finals of the 60-meter hurdles at the New Balance Indoor Nationals in March.

Erin Morrison, who was Parkland's top quarter-miler a year ago, is starting to come around after being sidelined for nearly eight weeks with an injured Achilles.

"We're still a little behind (in training) because of that two-week layoff," Hughes said. "But I'm satisfied with how training is going. The biggest challenge right now is trying to get past these injuries."

The Mustangs weren't at their best for the New Balance meet, yet they still turned in some credible performances individually. Sherman earned All-America honors with a third-place finish in the 200-meter dash (24.05 seconds).

On the morning of the race, Sherman woke up feeling pain in her right ankle. Despite the discomfort, she never gave any thoughts to scratching from the event.

"It was my last indoor nationals (for high school), and there was no way that I was going to sit that one out," said Sherman, the state outdoor champ in the 100 and 200. "I got a good tape job on the ankle and then I just gutted things out. When I'm competing, I'm not thinking about pain. Since I had Lane 6, my entire focus was to get out fast and hold on to the end."

Entering the indoor nationals, Williams was a solid pick to make All-America by finishing among the top six in the 60-meter hurdles. She ran well during the preliminary rounds. But in the finals, she hit a hurdle awkwardly, which caused her to break stride and lose contact with the front-runners. The end result was an eighth-place finish.

The Mustangs made amends in the 4x200 relay. McKinley McNeill, Sherman, Miaysha Bryant and Williams won comfortably in one minute, 38.10 seconds. The time was not as fast as Hughes had hoped for.

"I thought we might run faster," Hughes said. "The girls ran good on the first day, but as the rounds went by (in their other events), fatigue started to set in and their legs weren't fresh like they are normally. The long layoff had a lot to do with that."

Over the first two legs, the 4x200 turned out to be a dead heat between Parkland and the Medgar Evers Track Club (NY). Bryant put together a strong third leg to give Williams, who ran anchor, a slight lead to work with. Williams pulled away and Parkland won by six meters over the runner-up New Yorkers who ran one minute, 38.72 seconds.

A year ago, the Mustangs were the



Photo by Craig T. Greenlee
Miaysha Bryant ran the third leg on Parkland's victorious 4x200 relay team at the indoor national championships.

national indoor runners-up in this event, losing by .18 seconds to champ New Rochelle (NY). Three months later, Parkland delivered one of its best performances of the season in winning the 4x200 in decisive fashion at the New Balance Outdoor National Championships.

"We had the fastest time in the prelims, so we were ready when it was time to run in the finals," said Bryant, a senior who will run for N.C. Central. "All of us came together and agreed that we had to leave everything out there on the track. We were so excited and proud to win a national title in the relay."

The first day of spring was two weeks ago and it's still relatively early in the outdoor season. The Mustangs, however, are already showing signs of good things to come. They figure to be as formidable as ever when it's time for state qualifying at the Class 4-A West Regionals in May.

As of March 29, Parkland athletes had the fastest times in North Carolina in five events: Williams (100 hurdles/13.84 seconds and 300 hurdles/44.06 seconds); McNeill (400/56.24 seconds); 4x200 relay (1:42.58 seconds) and 4x400 relay (4:01.75 seconds). Look for the Mustangs to post progressively faster times as temperatures continue rise in the weeks ahead.

"We're training hard and our times are dropping," Bryant said. "The (unexpected) time off hasn't helped any. But it shouldn't be long before we're back to running the times we should be running at this time of year."

Sherman has mixed emotions about her final season coming to a close in less than six weeks. As a senior who has signed with University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, she wants to cement a championship-winning legacy for those who come after her.

"It's going to be a bittersweet time," she said. "On the one hand, I'm excited about going to school and getting the opportunity to compete at the highest level in college. And I want to have a good high school track farewell. The goal is to finish strong and set the bar high."

"We're all working to bring home another outdoor state team championship and I'm looking to get personal bests in the 100, 200 and the high jump. After that final (high school) meet, the next time I see my high school teammates, I'll be wearing Carolina-blue."



Photo by Craig T. Greenlee
Josh Gould pulls up to take a jumper in traffic.

Correction

Because of a production error, the cutlines for a photo in SportsWeek last week were wrong with a photo showing the Winston-Salem Preparatory Academy's boys basketball team. The photo is shown here with the correct cutline.