

## SPORTS

## Volleyball team anxious to start season

BY LAURA KIRBY  
Staff Reporter

The UNCA women's volleyball team has a target on their backs.

After two consecutive winning seasons, the team believes that they have demanded the respect of their opponents.

"Everyone is shooting for us," said Head Coach Julie Torbett. "I think having back-to-back good seasons proved that we aren't a fluke, by any means. It will definitely be more difficult to win as everyone is improving their programs and as everyone wants to beat us."

The Bulldogs lost three starters from last year's fourth-place team, including Big South first-team all-conference performer, Frida Sigurdardottir.

The team returns eight players including three starters, juniors Rose Butler and Amanda Wiles, as well as sophomore Elif Unlu.

The team's starting setter Wiles achieved second-team all-conference for the Bulldogs last year and outside hitter Unlu made the Big South's all-rookie team.

The Bulldogs hope to build on last year's 18-10 season that ended with a loss to Winthrop in the Big South Conference Championship game, missing out on their chances of participating in the NCAA tournament by one game.

"The biggest challenge this year is probably the big match against Winthrop," said Wiles.

"That was who we lost to in the finals last year. We just want to stay consistent in our season and no

matter how we do in the regular season, our goal is to make it to the championship game again."

Torbett said she believes her team is prepared for their first official game of the season as the Bulldogs travel to Appalachian State on Sept. 1.

"They're ready to play," said Torbett. "They're anxious after three weeks of practice."

The Bulldogs have four new players on the roster this year, adding three freshmen and one college transfer. Torbett said she is pleased with each of the team's new additions and their transition into the program.

"I'm very pleased with the newcomers and how they fit into our system," said Torbett. "The new incoming players are going to contribute right off the bat."

The team's tallest player, junior newcomer Allison Lambert, a college transfer from Arkansas State, will add much needed height to a roster that has only three players over six feet tall, according to Torbett.

"She's a huge block," said Torbett. "She has earned her spot on the right-hand side and that was a contested spot with our returning Elif Unlu. Elif can see how Allison can help us out blocking, so she is willing to move positions to help the team out. I think that is just a great show of a great team

player."

Wiles said that because of the Bulldogs lack of height, the team's ability to play defense will play a significant role on their success this year.

"We're a shorter team, so we focus on defense and that usually pulls us through," said Wiles.

"We can't let that ball hit the ground."

"We are relatively a smaller team, so that's going to be our biggest challenge," said Unlu.

Helping add to the height at the net for the Bulldogs will be freshman Ashley Wrightenberry, a six-foot Asheville native that plays both outside and middle hitter positions.

"Our freshman from T.C.

Roberson, Ashley Wrightenberry, is going to still continue to compete for one of the spots as a starter," said Torbett. "Then we have two defensive players in Melinda Lee and Danielle Hartman. Danielle is our back-up setter. Melinda will see the court as well."

The Bulldog's new players have not only garnered the respect of their coach, but also their veteran teammates.

"They're adding so much to the chemistry and also so much more dynamics to the team," said Wiles. "They're so competitive and high-spirited, they're great."

The players are taking advantage



CHARLOTTE CLAYPOOLE/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Freshman Melinda Lee and juniors Megan Murphy and Krysti Havens participate in the annual Blue-White scrimmage Aug. 24 where the girls showed off their skills.

of their practice time. They strive to work together as a team in order to play even better this season.

"We have better chemistry," said Unlu.

"We are all hungry for it. We're going to win this year," she said.

Wiles said that everyone on the team has great potential and that everyone has the ability to contribute.

"There's not a second string," said Wiles.

"Everyone is fighting for a posi-

tion. Everyone is on the same level. It's more competitive than it has ever been."

Torbett said that leadership was one area that her team needed to continue to work on and develop.

"We have eight upperclassmen on a roster of 12, and so you would think that that would be great leadership," said Torbett.

"However, one or two people need to step up and take over. If you have too many people in charge, that can be ineffective lead-

ership. I think that establishing those roles is going to be very important to us."

Other veteran returnees for the Bulldogs will be their lone senior Rory Kelly, juniors Krysti Havens, Megan Murphy, and Talia Ogle and sophomore Jessica Salyers.

The volleyball team will travel to Campbell University for the Campbell Tournament Sept. 10 and 11. The Bulldogs will battle against Campbell, Wofford and Western Carolina.

## Cross country confident of strong 2004 finish

BY JOE SREBALUS  
Staff Reporter

After strong performances to end the season at the regional meet last year, both the men's and women's cross-country teams have high expectations for the upcoming 2004 season.

"Expectations as far as conference goes, we definitely expect our women to be in the top three, preferably shoot for a title and on the men's side we have a good shot at top three, if things go well we could possibly shoot for a title on the men's side as well," said Head Coach Dean Duncan.

For the men's team to be successful they must train smart and remain healthy, according to Duncan.

"These guys train really hard, so you have to be sure they don't over train and put themselves in a position where they aren't available at the end of the year," said Duncan.

"It's not as much of a schedule type sport as soccer or volleyball," said Duncan.

"While the competitions during the season are very important, we are really looking to perform well for our Big South Conference meet and regional meet," said Duncan. "That is why it is important to stay healthy for the end of the year."

"The men would like to finish in the top 15 in the southeastern regional meet, and with a few of our individual runners,

we are hoping for top 50 in the region."

While the men's team is strong throughout the top five runners, Coach Duncan is looking for seniors Phil Later and Carmin Mazzotta to both have an outstanding year.

"This is Phil's last year, we are looking for him to be All-Conference along with Carmin," said Duncan.

Mazzotta and Later agree that the opportunity for success is greater this year than in years past.

"We have a really strong top five, so I feel we can place in the top three in conference as well as have the fastest top five in school history, so expectations are pretty high," said Later.

The team is prepared to place in upcoming events.

"Our top five can run with any top five in the conference," said Mazzotta.

According to Later, the focus on the men's team is aimed at a strong performance at the regional meet.

"We are really gunning for the regional meet, where a top 12 finish would be awesome, since we have never finished that high on the men's side," said Later.

The women will look to pick up where they left off last year after placing 12<sup>th</sup> in the southeastern region, which was the highest placing in school history, according to Duncan.

The women are looking to win a conference title, however, the beginning of the year could be a learning experience.

"For the women the first half of the sea-

son is going to be trying. We are going to go through a learning process, because right now we are sitting out two of our top five runners, two runners who were All-Conference last year," said Duncan.

Senior Loring Watkins and Junior Devon Nemire-Pepe, will not compete until midway through the season due to injury.

"Both are running now, but wouldn't be able to compete at 100 percent," said Duncan. "Look for big things from Senior Tiffany Carberry, who is running great right now."

Carberry, who was an All-Conference selection last year as well, will be looked to for leadership from the freshmen class.

The Bulldogs' first meet will be Sept. 11 at the Catamount Classic in Cullowhee on the campus of Western Carolina University.

"We are going to open up at Western," said Duncan.

"We are not going to race our top runners there, just race mainly our newcomers to get them adjusted to the level of competition," said Duncan.

On Sept. 18 the Bulldogs will travel to Chapel Hill to compete in the UNC Challenge, the first big meet of the season.

"For our meet at Carolina we will have had four or five weeks of training as opposed to in the last couple of years we have only had a couple of weeks," said Mazzotta.

"Coach has definitely set it up to where we can get out there and roll, we will have had some time to train and gel as a group and be ready to go," said Mazzotta.

"Chapel Hill is a big school, so if we can go out there and compete with them that would set a good tone for the rest of the season," said Later.



COURTESY OF MIKE GORE

Matt Quirk running for UNCA men's cross country. The men look to improve on a fourth place 2003 conference finish.

After the UNC Challenge comes the Winthrop Invitational. The runners will be able to get a preview of the course.

"There are a lot of 'ifs' in our sport. Cross country is volatile, you're training hard and injuries and things like that can happen, but we seem to have a pretty stable group this year," said Mazzotta.

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"Some people say you play to the level of your competition, but I'm not sure that's the case. We just weren't consistent enough, and that's something we've got to address this year," said Cornish.

"We have a really tough schedule this year and I'm really looking forward to playing some of the tough teams that we have to play this year," said Schwartz.

"Talent alone doesn't win games, but certainly it goes a long way," said Cornish. "We don't want to keep waiting for next year. If you keep waiting for next year, it doesn't come. This year it's all about being consistent, playing well, and getting good results."

"I will be satisfied if we go out and we play to our ability, even if we lose, even if we come away from some games, as long as we're sticking together as a team and fighting through it," said Cornish.

"I hope we come out in every game and play well, and at the end of the year we'll be a lot better than last year if we keep on improving," said Chapuis, a psychology major.

After his own successful career playing for the University of Manchester, Cornish has high hopes for the success of the Bulldogs this season.

"I'm greedy—I want to win it all," said Cornish. "There's always an element of luck on the way, but I'd love to win the Big South Championship again."

## From the sidelines with Joe and Amber

Q: Who do you think will win the 2005 NCAA National Football Championship? Why?

A: Joe Srebalus—The Georgia Bulldogs. They have a Heisman hopeful in junior quarterback David Greene and one of the best if not best college football players in defensive end, David Pollack. They are strong on both sides of the

ball and have veteran leadership.

A: Amber Saint-Clair— I'll be rooting for FSU, of course, but I wouldn't be surprised if USC takes it again. Losing a strong receiver, Mike Williams, is probably going to hurt, though.

Q: What do you think about Team USA's men's basketball and is

there anything wrong with the NBA?

A: Srebalus— Honestly it is getting old hearing everyone bash Team USA. Obviously, we do not have the best players from our country representing us. First of all, the rest of the world is beginning to catch up with America as far as producing basketball talent. Simply

look at the last couple of years of the NBA draft, the number of foreign talent has steadily increased. Last year 15 of the 60 players drafted were from foreign countries. Secondly, the team that has been put together lacks depth at numerous positions.

Although there are plenty of athletic slashers on the roster there is no "true" center and the USA lacks

perimeter shooters.

On top of all that, the U.S. team only had a couple weeks of training together as opposed to the majority of the teams in the Olympics have months. Many will look at a bronze medal finish as a disappointment, but they should portray the high standard we hold for basketball in this country. I could say U.S. basketball will learn from this pro-

cess and make changes accordingly.

A: Saint-Clair— Well, our team has done better in the past. We've won the gold medal 12 times but they still did pretty well.

You've got 144 of the best basketball players in the world competing, and not everybody can win. It'll be interesting to see how winning only a bronze medal will affect their motivation for 2008.