



Photo by Adrian Etheridge - Contributing Photographer

Athlete discourages criticism on sports, comments on progress

Meredith Foster

mfoster@unca.edu - Staff Writer



Resiliency is a term that isn't used enough to describe greatness. It seems that the greats are always known by their vacant loss columns and how many MVP's they have on their teams, but no one seems to notice those who manage to get up every time they fall.

While bad luck and ugly performances are part of every team's journey, it's their ability to bounce back that shows who they really are. Critics are everywhere and there is a never-ending line of people who will stand in the way, but the people who get past them are the ones who deserve a second look.

Last year, the UNC Asheville men's soccer team had a difficult year. They were unable to pick up any conference wins, even after playing close with some nationally ranked teams in the Big South.

They fought through a lot of ups and down throughout an unlucky season, but unfortunately they did not qualify for the Big South conference tournament. Some players would consider that reason enough to throw in the towel and ride out the rest of their eligibility because it's too hard to beat good teams. But

those aren't the kind of players we have.

Led by team captains Rob May, Bobby Castro, and A.J. Liames, I watched the majority of the men's soccer team come in each day of the off-season, and multiple times a day in the summer to work out. Individually, in pairs and as a team they came together to work harder and be better. Each day I walked in the gym there was someone lifting, doing sprints or ball-handling. With no one watching, they decided as a team to rise above their past record.

Already in their 2013 season, the Bulldogs have won four games, one being a conference game against Presbyterian College. They also took High Point, ranked third in the Big South, to double overtime to lose 1-0 in the 108th minute of the game. They have a tough road ahead, but have the talent and the leadership to earn a spot in the Big South conference tournament.

The weekend of Oct. 4 and 5, UNCA's women's volleyball team made the Radford/Liberty road trip. Or at least I think we did. It looked like Asheville and sounded like Asheville, but did not play like Asheville. Needless to say we suffered an uncharacteristic, ugly 3-0 loss to both teams. The loss to Liberty on Saturday gave them their first conference win.

Many people could use this as an excuse to take away from our team, but I think the more important statistics come from the week after. We practiced both days of fall break and the rest of the week with failure unpleasantly fresh in our minds. We found a

way to forget the mistakes and come together as a team to pick up two conference wins, one of them to the previous conference leader.

Upperclassmen leadership was evident as the team's senior captains led in stats, Rachel Wells with 42 digs on the weekend and Anna Moore with 25 kills and 7 blocks.

So far women's volleyball is undefeated at home in the Justice Center (5-0) and tied for second in the Big South (3-2). The next match will be Thursday Oct. 17 at home in the Justice Center. This match will also be the "Dig Pink" game to raise money for breast cancer awareness, and fans are encouraged to wear pink.

We have a coach that always tells us our character is defined by how we react when the bad times come, not by how impressive our win and loss columns are. While we are always working hard to keep the wins in our column, the most impressive thing about our team to me is that fact that we are always willing to accept the challenge. Whether we win or lose, the next team we play can know that we're coming for them, and if they are going to beat us, it will be the hardest win they've earned.

These characteristics are evident throughout the teams that make up the athletic program at UNCA. We all may stumble but our ability to come together and rise to the occasion what I believe truly makes our teams great.