

Gardner-Webb Sports

SAC Spring Sports Festival Recap

Softball team wins title

The Gardner-Webb softball team definitely saved their best for last. After struggling through much of the regular season, the Lady Bulldogs finally saw the "error" of their ways. Literally.

Head Coach Ellen McGinnis' team stormed into Salisbury, won four consecutive games, and came home with the South Atlantic Conference Tournament Title. And through all that the Lady Bulldogs realized defense can win you championships.



"We continued to hit the ball and get good pitching, but the key for us was we played solid defense throughout the tournament," McGinnis said.

In the first game of the tournament against Wingate, Gardner-Webb got all of its runs on one swing of the bat. Emily Harrelson's three-run homer proved to be all the scoring the team would need, as pitcher Tina Mitchum allowed just one run while going the distance.

In the next round, GWU downed Mars Hill, 7-3, as the team banged out 12 hits along the way. This win put the team into the championship bracket.

Gardner-Webb would then tangle with regular-season champion Carson-Newman. The team got a huge game from junior Emily Pecoul. She went 3-4 with a double and two RBI's and led the Lady Bulldogs to the upset of the Lady Eagles. In fact, it was Carson-Newman who struggled in the field as they committed five errors in the game.

GWU then awaited the winner of the Carson-Newman-Elon game in the finals. And once again it was Carson-Newman.

But it wouldn't have mattered who the team faced, because the Lady Bulldogs were ready to win a title.

"Our intensity in the championship game against Carson-Newman was incredible," McGinnis said. "I hadn't seen that type of intensity all year."

Gardner-Webb got another great pitching performance from Mitchum in the championship game as the team won 2-0. She tossed a shutout and gave up just five hits.

Baseball team falls in SAC

The GWU baseball team was the seventh seed heading into last weekend's South Atlantic Conference Tournament in Salisbury. In the first game, they dropped a heart breaker

to number two-seeded Carson-Newman College, 7-6.

The Bulldogs got a three-run home run by freshman Caleb Smith and held a five-run lead in the sixth inning. The Eagles then fought back with three home runs in the bottom of the sixth inning to tie the game. CNC then belted a solo home run in the bottom of the eighth inning to give the Eagles the victory.

The SAC Tournament is a double-elimination format for baseball, so the Runnin' Bulldogs were still alive. They next met up with third-seeded Wingate, who was beaten by Lenoir-Rhyne in the first round. Wingate downed Gardner-Webb 7-0 and therefore eliminated them from the tournament. The Bulldogs ended the season with a mark of 23-29.

Sophomore Wes Gentry concluded his amazing season by being recognized as the best catcher in the conference as he was named first team All-SAC. Gentry set a school record for doubles and was just two RBI shy, 46, of the school record held by John Hill. Gentry and Hill also tied for the team lead in home runs with nine apiece.

Golf team struggles

The Gardner-Webb golf team struggled quite a bit at their three day conference tourney in Salisbury. The Bulldogs finished eighth out of eight teams while shooting a 966 (+114), which was 83 shots behind conference champion Presbyterian (883, +31).

Jason Fullbright was the top finisher for GWU, 26th overall, as he shot a 236 for the tournament which was 23 over par. Josh Lail had the best individual day as he was four over par (75) on Saturday. Lail finished second on the team and 33rd overall with a 30 over par (243). Other golfers for the Bulldogs were Jason Winn (245, +32), Jeff Hooper (249, +36) and Chad Shumate (249, +36). The final team results were:

Presbyterian	883	+31
Catawba	884	+32
Elon	889	+37
Wingate	922	+70
Carson-Newman	922	+70
Mars Hill	927	+75
Lenoir-Rhyne	964	+112
Gardner-Webb	966	+114

Men's tennis finishes 3rd

The Gardner-Webb men's tennis team finished up a successful season at the Spring Sports Festival in Salisbury last weekend.

GWU finished up its 1997 campaign with a 12-11 mark, and a surprising third-place finish in the SAC Tournament.

The Runnin' Bulldogs came in as the number seven seed and faced Carson-Newman in the first round. The Eagles arrived in Salisbury with a stellar 20-1 record. But they were without their number one player, and the Bulldogs took advantage.

Gardner-Webb defeated Carson-Newman 5-2, behind strong performances in both singles and doubles from several players.

Jason Allen and Murray Wellington won easily at number two doubles, while Joe Harwell and Brad Burgess won a thriller at number three doubles, 9-8 (8-6).

Shaun Romney, Allen and Wellington all were victorious in singles matches, giving Gardner-Webb the five wins needed for the team victory.

In the second round, the Runnin' Bulldogs fell to Presbyterian College 5-2.

Jason Allen and Murray Wellington won their doubles match, and Wellington won his singles match in a losing effort.

It was a battle of the Bulldogs in the third place match, as GWU faced off against Wingate. Gardner-Webb won all three doubles matches en route to a 5-2 victory. Wellington and Allen continued their solid play with victories in both singles and doubles.

Women equal '96 finish

The Lady Bulldog tennis team entered the South Atlantic Conference Tournament with hopes of improving on last season's sixth place finish. Unfortunately for the team, this year's tournament would have the same result as last year's.

GWU has battled injuries all season, and this event was no exception. Senior Mindy Mallard returned just in time for her final SAC Tournament, but sophomore Hannah Valdez was unable to play because of a recent leg injury.

In their first round matchup against Elon, these injuries would finally catch up with the Lady Bulldogs, as the Fightin' Christians defeated Gardner-Webb 5-0.

In the second round, GWU would rally to knock off Mars Hill, for the right to face Catawba for fifth place in the conference.

Like last season, the Indians held off Gardner-Webb to claim that fifth-place position.

The Lady Bulldogs wrapped up the 1997 season with a 13-9 record, and the program's first ever regional record. GWU came into the tournament ranked #16 in the NCAA Division II East Region.

Both men's and women's tennis teams have reason to be optimistic heading into next year. The Lady Bulldogs lose just one senior, while the men's team returns its entire 1996-97 roster.