

## SPORTS

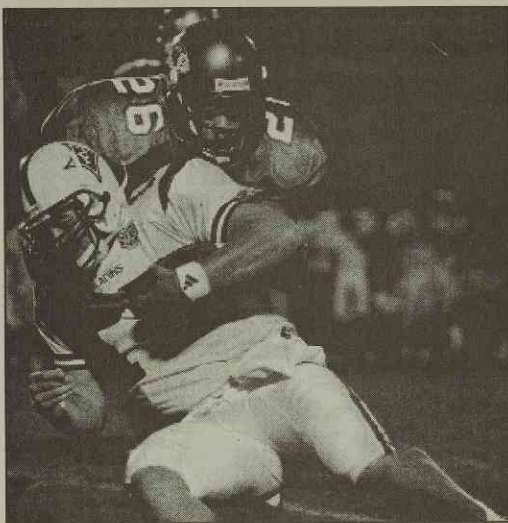


photo by Scott Holstein  
Mario Williams (26) drags his opponent down during a recent football game. Williams was rated 8th best safety in the country.

# Stars in their own class

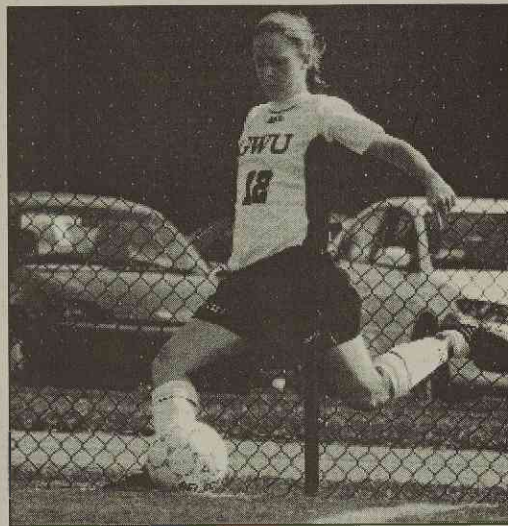


photo by Joel Fluty  
Women's soccer forward, Leeanna Woodworth prepares to kick the ball. Woodworth is chasing many records this season.

## Football standout, soccer lead player making history

Sean Hubbard  
Sports editor

Last year it was Jim Maxwell. This year it is Mario Williams. Over the past couple years, the Gardner-Webb football team has been like a reality show, but instead of "American Idol" or "The next big action star," its title would be "The next NFL player."

The pre-season All-American pick, Williams was rated the 8th best safety in the country by football.com. Williams has also received much regional recognition as he has won the Defensive Player of the Year award for the previous two seasons for the Big South conference.

In his three and a half seasons as a Bulldog, Williams has played in 27 games and posted some incredible stats. He has intercepted 8 passes, 3 of

which were returned for touchdowns, including 2 in the first game this season, forced 8 fumbles, recovered 7 fumbles, and his 299 tackles average out to over 11 per game.

In his senior year, Williams was hoping to go out with a bang and make his dream of becoming an NFL player a reality. However, his fantasy football career was put on hold in his last game when he suffered a hairline fracture to his shin while making a tackle, which ended his season. Williams said he is trying to stay positive about the situation and do all he can to recover quickly.

"I can just lift weights and strengthen my leg," said Williams. "I'm just trying to battle back."

With Williams out for the remainder of the season, the players filling in for his spot have some big shoes to

fill.

"You can't replace a player of his caliber," said Head Coach Steve Patton. "He is the best hitter, pound for pound that we have."

Williams is confident that his teammates will be able to deal with his absence and still succeed on the football field.

"They'll bounce back and pick up the slack," said Williams. "We have a lot of great players up front."

Even though Williams is an outstanding football player, Patton insists that his best qualities are those which take place off the field.

"He is a great person, and has never been in any trouble," said Patton. He stuck with his original decision of attending GWU even though he received offers from bigger schools, said Patton.

Even though Williams

cannot go out on the field and put on the pads, he is doing plans all doing all he can from the sidelines.

"I'm going to be the biggest cheerleader I can," he said.

Since Williams' collegiate statistics have been completed, another GWU standout is steadily climbing the record books for the Bulldogs.

### Women's soccer forward chasing records

The forward for the women's soccer team, Leeanna Woodworth is chasing history this season. After her first 11 games of her junior year, Woodworth has notched 13 goals, 10 assists and 36 total points, which are all personal season records.

She needs just one more assist to tie two other former Bulldogs for career

assists with 24. Woodworth is also chasing the single-season points record, which is 44. She has seven games remaining this season to tally nine more points to take over sole possession of that record.

Her 3.3 points-per-game are tops of all D1 players in the country. Her balanced offense of goals and assists also put her among the top ranks in each of these categories as well. She is 2nd in goal-per-game with 1.2 and 5th with .9 assists-per-game, respectively.

Woodworth's steady production of points helps the Bulldogs have the 28th most powerful offense in the country by producing 2.6 gpg.

Her production this year has not gone unnoticed by Head Coach Kevin Mounce.

"She is a complete player," said Mounce. "She has

individual skills. She can beat you one on one, hit a one-time ball, and can hammer the ball. She's good and is a big asset."

While most of the glory is put on Woodworth, she does it with much help from her teammates.

"The players are playing to feet this year, instead of just kicking it to the corner," said Woodworth. "We find the open player a lot better than we did last year."

Last year's team made it to the conference tournament before being knocked out in the first round by Georgia State. Woodworth is hoping for much of the same, with a little better result.

"We want to make it back to the tournament to prove it wasn't a fluke last season," said Woodworth.

LIBERTY 17, GWU 9

## Bulldogs suffer let down loss

Jacob Conley  
Pilot staff

A week after Gardner-Webb upset 25th ranked Western Carolina, the Bulldogs suffered an 8-point defeat on the road against the Liberty Flames, 17-9.

Gardner-Webb (2-3, 0-1 Big South) moved the ball effectively against Liberty's defense, but could not capitalize on their many scoring opportunities. GWU drove the ball inside Flame territory during six consecutive possessions leaving the scoreboard empty until midway through the third quarter.

On the opposite side of the ball, the Bulldog defense could not contain Liberty's rushing attack, as the Flames tailback, Sam Gado, rushed for over 200 yards. However, GWU's defense kept the Bulldogs in the game by forcing a turnover, as well as blocking a punt.

The Flames took the opening kickoff and used a methodical ball control offense to move down the field, eventually kicking a 23-yard field goal, to give Liberty the early 3-0 advantage.

Liberty used a big play to notch their next score on a 79-yard run by Gado, to widen the Flame lead to 10-0. The Bulldogs had an opportunity to cut into the lead before halftime, but



photo by Scott Holstein  
A Gardner-Webb football player breaks through several opponents during the Western Carolina game. The Bulldogs upset the 25th ranked Catamounts.

missing two field goals allowed Liberty to take a 10-point lead into the locker room.

Gardner-Webb finally put points on the scoreboard with 8:08 remaining in the third quarter. The touchdown was set up by a 34-yard pass play, started by quarterback Nick Roberts.

The drive was capped off on a 1-yard run by nose tackle Harold Wells, cutting the Liberty lead to 4 points at 10-6. The ensuing extra-point try, was missed by place kicker, Hunter Smith. However, Smith would redeem himself in the fourth quarter by connect-

ing on a 46-yard field goal, shaving the Liberty lead to a single point, 10-9.

The two teams traded punts until about three minutes left in the game, when the Bulldog defense gave up a long touchdown run to Gado. The PAT extended the Flames lead to 8 with 2:16 left on the clock.

Liberty's following kick-off went out of bounds, which gave GWU good field position.

Gardner-Webb was able to drive to the Liberty 32 yard line, with just over one minute left in the game. The hope of a comeback was snuffed out, however,

when Roberts' fourth down pass was completed just short of the sticks, and the Bulldogs were forced to turn the ball over on downs.

Virtually assured of victory, Liberty simply took two knees to run out the clock and give the Flames the victory.

The conference loss was Gardner-Webb's first in three years of Big South competition. The Bulldogs look to rebound next week, when they travel to No. 12-ranked Hampton University. Kickoff is scheduled for 1:30 p.m., and the game will be broadcast on 88.3 WGWW.

## Soccer team fights 'til the end

Sean Hubbard  
Sports editor

On Monday night, Gardner-Webb women's soccer team found themselves in a fight to the end with High Point. Neither team could gain control of the game until the 80th minute, when High Point scored what would prove to be the final goal of the night. GWU would fall just short of their sixth win of the season, dropping the match, 4-3.

The Bulldogs (5-6) started the scoring in the 22nd minute, when freshman Brittany Woods collected a ball from teammate Leeanna Woodworth and slipped a shot by the Panthers keeper to take the 1-0 lead.

GWU didn't have to wait long for a reply from High Point as just 1:13 later in the match the score would be leveled at 1. The score would stay tied through the remainder of the first half.

The barrage of goals in the second half would start just seven minutes into the half when the Panthers found the back of the net again and took their first lead of the game, 2-1. Woodworth answered quickly for the Bulldogs by tallying her career-high 13th goal of the season to knot up the score again.

Five minutes later, the

Panthers would retake the lead in the 62nd minute of the contest. As the game clock got closer and closer to zero, Woods again stuffed one into the net in the 79th minute to give the Bulldogs some hope for victory.

GWU's hopes were crushed just a minute later when it had to pick the game-winning goal out of the back of the net with just 10 minutes remaining.

Throughout the game, the Bulldogs had several good scoring opportunities but failed to capitalize on a few. Junior defender, Maureen Foley missed the chance of her first career goal by a few inches as her header flew over the crossbar during the waning moments of the first half.

"Our girls played hard," said Kevin Mounce, head coach. "We allowed a couple of goals we shouldn't have and had to play catch up. We just ran out of time."

Goals weren't the only things the teams traded almost equally. For both teams, nearly all the stats were close with 14 shots, while High Point won five corners to GWU's three.

GWU is back in action this weekend in their first away game in nearly a month when they hosted by Belmont and Lipscomb.