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vision, full of screaming fans.

As long as Seahawk students and fans are at home watching schools with established tradition and fan bases, UNCW can't grow into one of the elite mid-major programs.

The perfect example of a 'mid-major' school making the transition is Gonzaga. It all started in 1999, when the 'Zags advanced to the Elite 8 of the NCAA tournament and were mentioned on every sports show for the entire month of March.

It was the first of seven straight NCAA appearances for Gonzaga. Over that stretch, Gonzaga opened a new \$24 million, 6,000 seat facility in 2004. That facility, the McCarthy Center, has attracted ESPN often including a primetime 'Game Day' game against Stanford recently. Over that period, they've also been a staple in the top 25 polls.

That just goes to show what solid coaching, a little national exposure, and a good home-court advantage can do for a program. It's not completely realistic to think that UNCW can become a national power year in and year out right now, but it's up to fans to lay the framework now.

Students should skip watching Saturday's NC State versus Boston College game, and come out to support four seniors that have laid a framework for the program as one of the strongest in the CAA.

Seniors John Goldsberry, Mitch Laue, Taylor Lay and Beckham Wyrick, a group that has gone 78-39 in their careers, will be playing their final game in Wilmington against Georgia State. The game will be televised as the CAA Game of the Week, and it's up to the students to show the viewers the type of fan base that could follow the Seahawks into the postseason.

Those seniors deserve one of the greatest crowds Trask has ever seen. Not for all the games they've won, but how—with toughness, class and playing the game the right way.

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Skating on fresh ice: The inaugural season of UNCW ice hockey

BRANDON BONNETTE
CORRESPONDENT

Even though the UNCW club hockey team stands at 1-11, the members are finding a lot of positives in their inaugural season.

"We competed with the other teams very well, we didn't expect to go out and be the best team in the league we are in. It's going to take a few years to build a good team, but it will happen," said forward Ian Aldrich.

With strong support from the community of Wilmington, the hockey team is looking to make a splash into the cold world of hockey.

Formed by Ian Aldrich, Colin Rossi, Pete Schwarz and Blake Cute, the hockey team, which was quickly assembled in early 2005 with 21 total members, was recognized by the university through Sports Club Council.

All of the members of the hockey team have to try out to become a part of the club. According to their Web site [UNCWHockey.com]"Since the University provides our team with limited funding and most of our money comes from sponsors, each person who participates on our team must pay player dues each season."

The 2005-2006 player dues are \$300.

"Most of our budget is ice time for practices and games, which is primarily what player dues go towards," Aldrich said. The Web site goes on to say that "The UNCW Club Hockey Team will supply players with game jerseys and socks."

The Ice Hockey club has support from several businesses around Wilmington that show full support of the boys in teal on the ice. With 11 sponsors, including the rink where they skate, The Wilmington Ice House, they are always looking for more business for support.

"I hope that this becomes a well-recognized club at UNCW, in the league, and throughout the community. I hope that eventually we will be one of the best teams in the league and a great to be a part of," Aldrich said.

With the future of the hockey club seeming very strong and with the support of the community behind them, the Ice Hockey Club only seems to be growing stronger.

"One of my favorite things to see is other people enjoying the team besides just the members, and our fans show a great deal of support. We usually have about 200 students, parents, members of the rink and sponsors that come to watch and are awesome," Aldrich said.

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