

SEASON PROMISING FOR MEN'S BASKETBALL

By Sean Urguhart
STAFF WRITERS

The gym shook from the floor to the rafters as a boisterous crowd cheered on the Quakers to their first home victory of the season in an 87-52 annihilation of Villa Julie.

Ranked fourth in the nation in Division III, the Guilford men's basketball team holds high expectations for this season. Led by Old Dominion Athletic Conference (ODAC) coach of the year Tom Palombo, player of the year Ben Strong and a group of seasoned veterans, the team hopes to build on last year's success and bring home a trophy.

"We're going to be playing a little differently this season," Palombo said. "We've been working on getting the ball up the court faster and we're going to be playing inside a lot more. But no one is a finished product quite yet."

The Quakers played well in their first game, but there is a long season ahead of them.

"We've got a tough schedule and we're playing a lot of really good teams," Palombo said. "(The) ODAC is a difficult conference to be in."

There was a large turnout for the game, contradicting the stereotype that students don't support Guilford's athletic team.

"This is the single greatest turnout I have ever seen for a sporting event at Guilford," said junior Shepherd Lashley, who frequents many Guilford athletic events.

A group of white-T-shirt clad fans were the most prominent members of the crowd. Supporting their team and razzing the visitors, they truly became the sixth man on the court.

Coach Palombo was ecstatic over the attendance at the game.

"My wife said that when she arrived, she could hear the crowd from outside and was surprised to see that the game hadn't even started yet," Palombo said. "It was just awesome; it was like a real college basketball game."

From the start it was clear that Guilford had an advantage over the opposition, height wise at least, with two players over 6'10" – Strong and Tyler Sanborn. Despite their vertical dominance, Guilford had a rocky first half, giving up easy points and missing their first two attempts on goal.

"We got started a little late and looked nervous, but we got it going and began to get up for rebounds and started playing better defense," Palombo said.

By halftime, the Quakers led 38-35 and the crowd was privileged to see the Guilford cheerleaders perform. There was also contest in which three fans participated in a relay race, in which they had to put on Quaker basketball uniforms and try to make a basket.

The Quakers started the second half strong. The team began to move as a single unit, destroying the Villa Julie defense. Their coach yelled frantically from the sidelines, while his team was dismantled right before his eyes. The visitors endured a six-minute-long scoreless run during the second half, during which Strong scored 11 straight points.

Strong was named ODAC Player of the Week for his performance against Villa Julie, racking up 29 points, 14 rebounds and eight assists. The team's other big man, sophomore Tyler Sanborn also had a stand out performance, scoring 14 points and grabbing 13 rebounds. Junior George Neville scored 20 points off the bench and took down nine rebounds. Senior Caleb Kimbrough, a high school teammate of Strong, tallied seven points and seven assists.

The Quakers dominated the second half, allowing Coach Palombo to substitute in some less experienced players so they could get some game time. First-year Martin Stephenson scored two points and got four rebounds, and T.C. Anderson, also a first-year, got two assists.

The Quakers showed their prowess on the court and proved

they're a force to be reckoned with, and many are looking forward to the rest of the season.

"That game was incredible. I had so much fun," said junior Morgan Kerr after the game. "I'm really psyched about Guilford basketball this season; I can't wait for the next game."

The second half ended with the Quakers ahead 35 points and the crowd aptly singing, "na na na na, na na na na, hey hey hey, good-bye."



(CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE) **Ben Strong** puts up a shot against Villa Julie. The student section was packed for the game. Fans from the community and the college cheer on the Guilford men. **Caleb Kimbrough** lunges for a successful lay-up.

PHOTOS BY JEREMY BANTE/GUILFORDIAN

