

sports

Slugfest ‘09

Mason Enters Spring with High Hopes

BRIAN CHAN
Sports Editor

Unlike Barry Bonds, George Mason University's home run king returns for his final season. Senior outfielder Scott Krieger, Mason's all-time leader in home runs, enters the 2009 season in range of breaking several more school records, as the team was selected to finish second in the Colonial Athletic Association in the preseason polls.

After starting off the 2008 campaign with four losses, the Patriots were still below .500 until mid-April.

"Since we started off training indoors, we were at a disadvantage once we had difficulty adjusting to playing outdoors. Once we came together, we gelled as a team. With a great defense to go along with our very good offense, we started putting together wins," said Krieger.

Mason completed the season with a 30-25 record while finishing third in the conference with an 18-10 record. The team's late season rally included a four-game sweep over the College of William & Mary Tribe. But Mason's run was ended in an 18-14 loss to the James Madison University Dukes, the eventual CAA champion. Krieger's three home runs and the 9-3 lead had not been enough to stop the Dukes' rally.

"Unfortunately, losing that last game after a great performance was bittersweet," said Krieger.

Krieger, a first-team ABCA All-East Region player, batted .381 and slugged a team-high .751. He hit 21 home runs in 2008, the most ever by a Mason player in a season. His 49 career home runs are also most all-time at Mason. In last season's



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tournament, Krieger belted five home runs and drove in 14 RBIs. As a sophomore, he matched Kevin Burke's 20 home runs, a record that stood for 22 years. As Krieger looks to add more to his home run total, he also looks to displace previous owners of other school records.

Krieger's Ruthian power earned him the honors of CAA Preseason Player of the Year and All-CAA Baseball Team.

The Preseason All-CAA Baseball Team also includes three other Mason players: catcher Chris Henderson, first baseman Justin Bour and second baseman Ryan Soares. Henderson batted .339 with a .403 OBP and led the team with 20 doubles last season. Bour, Mason's left-handed power-hitter, batted a team-high .398 with 15 home runs and led Mason with 65 RBIs. Bour improved across the board after posting 35 more hits and walked 22 more times between his freshman and sophomore season.

"My goals for this season are to improve my batting average, RBI total, and OBP, and also give us more opportunities on base," said Bour.

Soares brings back his stellar defensive play as well as some pop with the bat.

"With us losing only one player from last season and having a couple of players returning [from injury], we are more experienced as a team, especially with our pitching," said Bour.

Brecko, a groundball pitcher, posted a 7-2 record with a 3.94 ERA and four saves in 20 appearances and was named to the second-team ABCA All-East Region. In 61-2/3 innings, he held opposing batters to a CAA-leading .237 average. Brecko was lights out from Apr. 6 to May 21, going 4-0 with a 1.54 ERA and a .203 opponent's batting average.

After a phenomenal 2007, reliever Jordan Flasher suffered a season-ending elbow injury after his first appearance. He was selected by the Toronto Blue Jays in the 39th round of the 2008 Major League Baseball Amateur Draft. Flasher will look to rebound and repeat his 2007 season after setting a single-season school record with 14 saves.

Krieger and Bour, one of the CAA's most prominent power-hitting tandems, will look to provide Mason with their first conference title since 1992. Their success is driven by a healthy and competitive atmosphere. Krieger was named to the Louisville Slugger Preseason All-American First Team, while Bour earned Third Team honors.

The Dukes, who eliminated Mason in the CAA tournament last season, will enter the 2009 season as the favorite to win the conference again. They earned six first-place votes and 95 points in the preseason poll against Mason's 91 points.

With baseball season just around the corner, Mason is ready to take the field.



Broadside's Fan of the Week

Patrick Adams

What makes you Mason's biggest men's basketball fan?

"I can do the YMCA."

Snap Shot



PHOTO BY DANNY JACKSON

Michael Morrison moves around a Delaware player to contribute the Patriot's win 78-55.

SPORTS IN A MINUTE

MEN'S BASKETBALL

For the first time in nearly two years, the George Mason University men's basketball team rebounded from a two-game losing streak. Mason (15-5, 8-2) was able to overcome a shaky start to dominate the University of Delaware Blue Hens (9-13, 3-7) in a 78-55 win at home. The Patriots were led by a balanced attack with five players reaching double-digits in points. Freshman forward Michael Morrison and senior guard Dre Smith led the team with 14 points apiece. Smith also recorded three of the team's 13 steals. Coming off a career-high 24-point performance against the Virginia Commonwealth University Rams, sophomore guard Cam Long achieved his first ever double-double with 11 points and 10 rebounds. Sophomore guard Isaiah Tate also scored a career-high 10 points off the bench. Midway through the first half, the Blue Hens took a 20-11 lead, but the Patriots' 15-5 run gave the home team their first lead of the game. After allowing the Blue Hens to score 35 points in the first half with a 47 shooting percentage, the Patriots held their opponents to shooting just 27 percent from the field. Delaware guard Marc Egerson led all scorers with 20 points and grabbed 11 rebounds. The Patriots remain as the only undefeated Colonial Athletic Association team at home after improving their record to 10-0. The team will continue to be tested on the road as senior guard John Vaughan returns to the court after a scary episode last week at Northeastern University.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Freshman guard Becky Cox continues to shine in her first year as a college basketball player. Cox's career-high 14 points were not enough as the Patriots (2-17, 0-8) fell to their CAA counterparts, the University of North Carolina-Wilmington Seahawks (10-9, 4-4), 68-52. With a 40-26 lead at halftime, UNCW outscored Mason 19-4 off of turnovers. Cox recently matched her career-high 12 points in a game against the James Madison University Dukes as her role on the team has been increasingly significant. Cox converted 4-of-5 three-pointers, and added six rebounds and three assists. Senior center Brittney Wilkins contributed 13 points. Sophomore forward Eugenia Broadus provided bright spots for Mason's defense with her five blocks and three steals. As a team, Mason recorded ten steals to go along with a season-high nine blocks. However, the team committed 26 turnovers. Four Mason players turned the ball over at least four times with sophomore Brittany Poindexter leading the team with six. Despite shooting just 30 percent from the field and turning the ball over seven times, UNCW forward Brittany Blackwell scored a game-high 19 points and grabbed 12 rebounds. The Lady Patriots host the Drexel University Dragons and Georgia State University Panthers this week as they look to snap their nine-game losing streak.

WRESTLING

On Friday night, the University of Virginia Cavaliers (9-8) wrestling team defeated Mason (4-7-1) in a one-sided affair at the VAWA Benefit Double Dual in Richmond. After gaining the early 13-0 lead on their first four wins, the Cavaliers wrapped up their 28-6 victory, winning four of the last five matches. Freshman Mendbagana Tovuujaev led off for Mason, but fell to Chris Henrich, ranked ninth in the nation, in a 4-3 decision between the 174 pounders. Earlier this week, Tovuujaev, ranked 19th in the country according to Amateur Wrestling News, was named CAA Rookie of the Week after posting a 2-0 record. This is the second time Tovuujaev earned CAA Rookie of the Week honors as he already won the award on Jan. 6. Sophomore Zach Ulm struggled against the 16th-ranked Rocco Caponi in a 10-1 major decision. In the matchup between two nationally-ranked wrestlers, Brent Jones defeated sophomore Cayle Byers in a 3-1 decision. UVA extended their lead to 13-0 after their win in the battle of the heavyweights. Mason's first win came on a 12-6 decision as junior Brian Wright defeated Wyatt Anderson. After falling in the next three matches, sophomore Frankie McLaughlin IV pulled off Mason's other victory in a 5-2 decision over Jedd Moore. Mason has one home match remaining in their 2009 season after competing against Binghamton University and Duquesne University yesterday.

Snap Shot



PHOTO BY GRACE KENDALL

Senior Brittney Wilkins goes up for a shot during the women's game against the University of North Carolina-Wilmington. The Patriot's lost to the Seahawks 68-52.

Homecoming 2009

February 8-14

Sunday, Feb. 8
Mason Women's Basketball
Patriots vs. Georgia State
Patriot Center
2 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 14
Mason Men's Basketball
Patriots vs. Northeastern Huskies
Patriot Center
12 p.m.

Be sure to check out *Broadside* next week for a preview of both games and the rest of our Homecoming preview coverage.

For a full calendar listing of Homecoming events, visit www.gmu.edu/homecoming