Meramec Magic Athletic News                                                                                  September, 2006

Volleyball Squad Repeats As John Wood Tourney Champs
by Sports Info. Director Bob Frischmann

The signs of a strong season were obvious during the volleyball team’s ’06 debut, the John Wood Tournament Aug. 25-26 in Quincy, Ill. The Magic won two crucial matches in the tourney - a nail-biting 32-30, 33-31 squeaker over host John Wood, and after falling behind two games to Carl Sandburg College, winning the next three to cap off the comeback.

“It shows that we have confidence and talent here and hopefully the team will go back and win it again next year,” said sophomore middle hitter Sarah Herbert (Belleville West.) “One of the directors joked that if we win it next year, he’s not going to let us come back a fourth year.”

Music to the ears of ninth year head coach Lee Clauss, Jr., who has worked hard to build the program into a solid contender. Judging by this year’s talent, he has succeeded.

The Magic boast a perfect balance of six sophomores and six freshmen, including sophomore setter and team captain Kandice Berkel (St. Clair), who won first team All-Region honors in ’04, then missed the ’05 season with ACL reconstructive knee surgery. “Besides playing an outstanding weekend tournament,” said coach Clauss, “she’s kind of a lively person and just keeps everyone in a good mood and up.” Her teammates agree. “She never gives up,” said Herbert. “She’s just like a miracle girl out there - she shows a lot of leadership.”

Herbert, an All-Region honorable mention pick last year, is another important piece of the puzzle. “Some girls really improved from last year to this year,” said coach Clauss, “in particular, Sarah Herbert in the middle. She really is looking good.”

Also adding optimism to the year is sophomore outside hitter Jessica Greaves (St. Joseph’s Academy). “Jessie can really pound the ball,” said Clauss, “very hard hitter, very good defensive player. She’s a very solid player all the way around.”

Solid would also describe sophomore captain Sara Templeton (Seckman), an outside hitter, and sophomore middle hitter Sarah Rusnak, a six footer out of St. Elizabeth’s Academy. Adding depth are sophomores Jaime Hacker (Perryville), an outside hitter, and Sarah Guinther (Pacific), a setter.

Among the freshmen, Laura Kitchen (Rosati-Kain) is standing out as a defensive specialist/setter. Two other newcomers are vying for a starting spot as middle hitter.

“It’s between Amy Moran (Mehlville) and Samantha Huson (Windsor),” said Clauss. “Right now, it’s kind of neck-and-neck. I think Amy’s a little better blocker and Sami’s a little better hitter. They’re both working hard.” Other highly touted freshmen are Stephanie Narez (St. Elizabeth), and Stacey Baxter (St. Clair).

One key to success will be constant effort and hustle, even after seemingly impossible balls such in the John Wood Tourney. “We had a real strange one where a ball was shanked and obviously going out of
bounds," said Clauss. "It just happened to hit the basketball hoop, bounced back on the court, and we got the point out of it."

That philosophy was a part of the players' mentality in the tourney. "Anytime someone shanked a ball, everyone would run after it," said Berkel. "Not one ball that we shanked went on the ground because everyone hustled and we’d get it back in play which is phenomenal."

Hopefully, "phenomenal" will also describe the season - an outlook hard to deny at this point. "I think we have more talent than last year and last year we did pretty well," said Clauss. "The girls we have are very good - I think they're good enough to win."


Memory Of Teammate Motivates Men's Soccer Team In '06

Sixteen for sixteen. That's the simple, but relentless theme to the season for the men's soccer team as they strive to win their first Region XVI championship since 2000 for number 16 - former teammate Colin Fahrenkamp who perished in a highway accident in January.

"I think everyone thinks about him everyday," said sophomore midfielder Grant Landon (Marquette), a close friend of Fahrenkamp's. "He was one of my brothers, therefore he’s always with me and I’ll do my best to retire his jersey with a national championship."

Landon will wear jersey number 16 this season in honor of Fahrenkamp at the request of Colin’s parents, David and Fritz. The team has also been wearing special “16 For 16” shirts at practices, and may have other special tributes throughout the season, which began Tuesday with a 1-1 tie against Southwestern Illinois, and continues Thursday through Sunday in the MO Invitational Tournament at Chesterfield.

“We like to use his spirit as a positive force that can hopefully jumpstart the season and carry us through to the playoffs,” said head coach Brian Smugala. “Believe me, he’s talked about a lot. He absolutely will be a major part of what we do.”

What the Magic do will also be guided by a good mix of returning talent, and a high caliber group of recruits. Depth will be a strong point, with no weak spots on the bench.

“Last year we weren’t deep enough and couldn’t use our whole bench,” said Landon. “This year, we can. That’s going to really help us in the playoffs.”

The depth will come from the likes of returning players like Landon, and midfielders Nick Bigogno (Lindbergh), Sam Stremlau (St. Mary's), Sam Hackett (Lindbergh), and Colin Kuster (DeSmet). Defender Jimmy Koch (St. Charles West) will back up goalie Jim Mace (Seckman), while last year’s leading scorer Joe Brennan (CBC) returns to the forward position with 12 goals and seven assists a year ago.

“You get into the rivalries with Jefferson and East Central Colleges," said Bigogno. "They took it from us last year so we’re really going to come out against those guys and show them how we play up here so we can get down to nationals.”

A strong recruiting effort may put Meramec in that spot. Charlie Reitz (CBC), a bulldog of a sweeper/back transfers in from Div. II Francis Marion University, while Div. I Butler University transfer Brady Graham (DeSmet) will be looked to in the forward position to beef up the offense.

"Brady Graham up top might be the most dangerous addition that we've signed," said Smugala. Graham tallied 11 goals and 10 assists for DeSmet in ’04.
Smugala describes freshman midfielder Kyle Gamache, a Francis Howell Central grad, as a “physical, smart player.” He also emphasized midfielders Bryan Enger (Mehlville High), and Jesse Cook (Webster Groves.)

The goalie spot is still up for grabs with sophomore Jim Mace competing with transfer Tyler Italiano (St. Mary’s/Aurora College.) “They’re really pushing each other in practice,” said Smugala.

However, the “secret weapon” out of the mix of newcomers could easily be freshman Steve Jeon, a Parkway South graduate. Jeon, a forward/midfielder with blinding foot speed, has looked impressive in scrimmages with his ability to use his speed to score.

“Steve’s a really, really fast forward,” said Bigogno. “He’s going to help a lot.”

However, even with the tremendous amount of talent, coach Smugala has a three step formula necessary for success this season.

“Playing together, getting behind the ball, and keeping our composure,” he said. “If we can do those three things, the goals will come and the wins will come.”

---

**Women’s Soccer Team Hopes To Find Strength In Numbers**

If there’s strength in numbers, the women’s soccer team hopes to have a Herculean season with 16 team members on roster and possibly a few more on the way.

“Last year was a tough situation where we had injuries to our goalie and our leading scorer,” said head coach Jeff Karl. “It changes the whole complexion of what you do.”

As a result, the “complexion” last year was a 7-7-3 mark, one far below the perennially successful team’s standards. The additional numbers will keep players fresh for critical stretches late in games when last year the team had to gut it out.

“That definitely slowed us down when we started getting winded around halftime,” said returning wing/midfielder Kelly Webb, a Washington, MO native. “It’s definitely a plus if someone can come out for five minutes and get a breather - that helps a lot in the game.”

And, the 2006 numbers translate into not just quantity, but quality. Kelly Koshak, a sophomore forward from Marquette High, is looked to ignite the offense. She led all Meramec scorers last year with eight goals.

She’ll be paired with freshman Bridget Holmes from Lindbergh High at forward. Holmes had seven goals and two assists for the Flyers in 2005.

“Bridget is a very strong striker,” said teammate Kelly Webb. “She’s very good with her feet, very fast, she looks very strong on top.”

One big strength will be at goalie with Haley Fox, a freshman coming off a four year varsity starting career at Lindbergh High. Fox, who describes herself as an aggressive goalie and a “tough cookie”, racked up 13 shutouts and a 0.56 goals against average last spring for Lindbergh.

“I don’t talk a lot,” admitted Fox, “I usually rely on the sweeper to do a lot of the talking. I’m usually thinking about where I’m supposed to be.”

Coach Karl feels the presence of Fox could be a key for the Magic, who have won 13 Region XVI championships in their 23 year program history.
“With Haley Fox in goal we really have a goalkeeper that is solid,” said Karl. “She’s so technically sound, she has good size, and good presence in goal.”

Several other players will also give the Magic a good presence, including sophomores Amanda Harris (Fox), Tara Baechle (St. Pius X), Emily Schultz (Parkway North), and Jenna Ridenhour (Washington, MO). Karl also looks for good things from a DuBourg High duo - freshmen Angie Rich and Alex Klapp.

“Alex played in the backfield, at sweeper, wingback - that’s going to give us some nice strength there,” said Karl. “Rich has good size and she’s really worked hard at getting herself into condition.” DuBourg advanced all the way to the state championship game Rich’s junior year. Backing up the defense will also be freshman Theresa Weil from Oakville High.

An added bit of excitement, and history, will take place with the team’s sixth victory of the season. That win will mark the three hundredth career victory for coach Karl, a feat unmatched in junior college women’s soccer.

“I never in my wildest dreams thought I would ever win 300 college games,” said Karl. “I really appreciate a lot of the women that for over 20 years have really been committed and dedicated to the sport.”

And, likewise, the team appreciates, and respects coach Karl. “No one else can have that place in history,” said sophomore Kelly Webb. “To say that you were the person who gave him that win is very important, very special. And, what kind of guy can put up with college girls for 24 years straight? That’s definitely an accomplishment!”

The Magic opened the season with a daylight-shortened 0-0 tie against Harris-Stowe Aug. 29. They next play Sunday, Sept. 10 at 3:00 at home against Illinois Central.

7th Annual Scholarship Walk Set For Oct. 7

The 7th Annual Magic Scholarship Walk will unfold Saturday morning, Oct. 7 on the Meramec campus. The walk raises much-needed funds for student/athlete scholarships. Approximately 90% of Meramec student/athletes are from the local area.

Registration forms are available in the Athletic Office. The entry fee is $20. A door prize offered to in-person participants are two air tickets to anywhere in the continental United States courtesy of Denmark Travel. Coca-Cola and UPS are also sponsors.

Riley Baker/Lottie Hill Wrestling Scholarship Set Up

A new scholarship will provide a boost to Magic wrestlers with their tuition costs. The Riley Baker/Lottie Hill Scholarship will provide $1,250 toward tuition costs for wrestlers.

The honor is named after two persons with strong ties to Meramec wrestling: the late Corporal Riley Baker who died in an attack on his company in Iraq in June. Baker wrestled for coach Ron Mirikitani in 2002-'03 and was a national qualifier; and the late Lottie Hill, whose son Brian Hill wrestled at Meramec in the early 1990’s.

Four grapplers will share the award this year - Mitch Barnett (Liberty, MO), and Oakville High graduates Kyle Foley, Darren Green, and Ryan Sutton.

Mirikitani Takes Over Presidency Of National Association

Wrestling coach Ron Mirikitani has added another honor to his long list of his 37 year career at Meramec. In September he will take on the duties of president of the National Wrestling Coaches Association. He was elected to that post last year and will serve a two year term.
Coach Mirikitani will be sworn in during the organization’s annual conference in Pennsylvania.

**Cheerleaders Offer Repeat Performance At Science Center Sept. 23**

After wowing crowds of tourists and locals alike with their whirlwind performance Aug. 25 at the St. Louis Science Center, the Magic cheerleading team will make an encore appearance on Saturday, Sept. 23.

The team, under coach **Sandy Yanko**, will perform four 10 minute performances every half hour beginning at 1:00.

**Clauss To Represent MO At National Senior Olympics**

He doesn’t know how to just coach volleyball, ninth year head coach **Lee Clauss, Jr.** can also still play the game, and play it well. Clauss, a member of the local Senior Olympic volleyball team, is headed to the 2007 National Senior Olympics games in Louisville, KY.

Clauss’ team, JP’s Corner, qualified through their participation in the 2006 Show-Me Games in Columbia,