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Magic News

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Wrestlers Hope For National Mat Magic In '07-08

Nearly four decades of patience may finally pay off for St. Louis Community College - Meramec wrestling coach **Ron Mirikitani**. His 38 years at the helm of the Meramec wrestling program have had everything - individual national champions, All-Americans, induction into eight halls of fame for himself - everything that is, except, a national team championship.

Following a feverish recruiting year, the Magic may just have all the pieces to get the job done for the legendary figure in collegiate wrestling. The Magic are loaded at every weight class like never before. **David Mirikitani**, Ron's son and volunteer assistant coach, says his father can sense the revved up talent level.

"It was very fun to watch his face the first two weeks of practice. He's like a kid in a candy store, he's got a bunch of new toys," said David. "He can just shape them and mold them, tweak them, and polish them - but they're already good, we got to make them a little better."

How much better is hard to say looking at a roster already laden with multiple state champions and All-Americans. **Donald Woods** comes in still ready to peak following his 47-0 senior year at McCluer North last season and St. Louis Post-Dispatch Wrestler Of The Year honors. Woods made a successful debut at the Lindenwood Open, capturing a fourth place medal. The highlight of the day was Woods' 3-2 victory over Div. I Missouri's Brandon Wright.

"It just made me want to wrestle harder," said the 157 lb. Woods. "I wanted to see how I matched up against a D-I caliber wrestler and it made me wrestle better, made me realize where I was on the chart. I learned a lot. I know what I need to work on now and I'm going to work harder in the room to improve."

Off the charts might describe the high school career of **Aaron Senzee** (Kearney.) The Kansas City native made a clean sweep during all four high school years, winning a quartet of state titles. The 141 pound Senzee has the killer instinct on the mat.

"He's a winner. The kid's probably won some 160 matches in high school, he probably won 50 of them by one point," said David Mirikitani. "He knows how to win close matches. Once he gets a lead, he's very poised for a freshman. He likes to compete, he's a battler."

And battle he did at Lindenwood Oct. 27. On his way to a third place medal, Senzee scored a 5-4 win over McKendree College's Kyle Jahn, an NAIA national runner-up last season.

"Winning that match was a matter of just not stopping and knowing that it was going to be close," said Senzee. "It was tied up three-to-three and then I ended up getting a takedown with like 20 or 30 seconds left. I just tied up and then I hit a nice little slide-by on him. I knew I could seal it up."

Heavyweight **Ryan Sutton** (Oakville) sealed up a fourth place Lindenwood medal winning four of six matches on the day. Sutton, a third place national medalist and returning All-American from last year's Meramec squad, is bumping up in weight from his 197 lb. spot a year ago. Although he will be facing opponents at times some 60-70 pounds heavier than him, Sutton already has a game plan.

"I use the strength that I have but pick my spots a little smarter," said the All-American. "Instead of shooting things so straightforward, I'm going to have to take a lot more angles, a lot more stuff to the outside, just use more agility as opposed to trying to force things."

Agility would also describe the style of freshmen **Deron Winn** (Liberty, MO) and **Jamelle Jones** (Dover, DE.) Winn used his athleticism to capture the second place award in the 197 lb. division at the Lindenwood Open, while Jones earned a fifth place honor at the same weight class.

"They both can create they're so powerful, they really create their angles off of speed and not strength," said Mirikitani. "They get you to move and step the wrong way, lean in the wrong direction - then they run through you. Their speed is what gets you on the wrong angle but then you can't recover."

Winn's high school opponents the last three years certainly had trouble recovering against his flurry of offense. Winn won three state titles his sophomore through senior years, suffering only one loss total during that period. He flashed the same brilliant offense at the Lindenwood Open, winning five of six matches for a second place medal. Winn turned it up a notch for his semi-final foe, Lindenwood's Kyle Frawley, a two-time NAIA All-American.

"I really wanted to run up the score early and get after him," said Winn. "He's a defensive wrestler and he likes to score off of offensive wrestlers' mistakes so I tried to not make any mistakes and finish clean and do everything right and came out on top."

The Magic also can run through opponents in the lower weights as well. **Miles Bolin** (Ft. Zumwalt W.) is a quality 125 pounder and a three-time prep medalist. **Kyle Hatchel** (Francis Howell North), at 133 lbs., is a gamer who doesn't know the meaning of quit in a match, placing sixth at Lindenwood.

"I think he's a surprise to a lot of people because he doesn't wrestle very flashy, he's just a grinder," said Mirikitani. "He doesn't wrestle real high or real low. If he loses a match, he learns from it and he moves on. But, he expects to win."

And, this Magic squad expects to win, and win a lot this season. Their goal? To take care of a long overdue debt.

"I just want to do whatever I can to give Ron a team title," said Sutton. "He deserves it so much!"

Men's Basketball Team Looks For Wins In 'D'

Despite a stellar 21-10 record last season, the men's basketball team returns with much motivation. They'll be trying to improve upon a season that saw the Magic make a rare, early departure from the Region XVI Tournament playoffs at the hands of Forest Park.

Head coach **Randy Albrecht**, in his thirty first year, looks to continue the 22 year streak of winning seasons, as well as a return to the national tournament where the Magic placed third in 2005.

"This year's team is more athletic and they'll hopefully be better defensively and rebounding-wise," said Albrecht. "But, we'll probably have to search for scoring. Last year I think we averaged close to 80 points a game. We really only have four players back from that team and I think their combined scoring average is 15-16 points a game."

If scoring is a dilemma, defense may be the solution. Last year, Meramec scored nearly 80 points a game, but gave up 69 points per contest, a somewhat high figure. The '07-08 version of the Magic is built to bring the 69 points allowed per game down closer to the 60 given up per game in 2005.

"Defense is a big thing," said returning forward **Clay Zerr**. "Last year we had a lot of holes defensively. We could put a lot of points up but you have to stop the other team, you can't outscore everybody so if we can pick up the defense that's a big help."

The 6'6" Zerr will be a dominant defensive force in the paint along with another twin tower - 6'7" sophomore **Bill Brandenburg**, a NCAA Div. II transfer from Christian Brothers College in Memphis, and a Kirkwood High alum. The 220 pound Brandenburg won't shy away from action underneath the basket.

"I'm up and down the floor a lot, I do a lot of running," said Brandenburg. "I'm physical inside, I like a lot of contact. We got guys who love to compete and love to win so we're going to go out and play hard and hopefully win a lot of games."

One of those competitors is sophomore **Jake Prosser** (Francis Howell North), who played more minutes last season than any other returning player. Prosser, a defensive specialist, still managed to average 5.4 points a game and two rebounds while shooting free throws at a 75% clip last season. Prosser feels the team has a much different look from a year ago.

"Last year we were more of a shooting team," said Prosser. "This year we're kind of more athletic and we got a down low presence with Billy (Brandenburg), a dominant low post, something that we lacked last year. We'll be getting after teams on defense a lot more than last year."

Also back is **Stan Crawford** (Hazelwood Central) In terms of scoring points, Albrecht may look to Crawford as an offensive source.

"I think the real improvement out of the returning players for scoring will be Stan Crawford," said Albrecht. "Stan really worked hard over the summer and he looks like someone who can make some jump shots for us."

Among the newcomers, 6'0 guard **Brandon Crites** (Hallsville, MO), a Columbia College transfer, **Theo Green**, a 6'5" freshman forward from McCluer High, and guard **Eddie White** (Parkway West) who led the Suburban West Conference in scoring as a senior two years ago with 16 points per game. Albrecht is also high on 6'4" forward **Josh Dale** (Affton.)

"Josh is a terrific prospect," said Albrecht. "He's got a lot of court speed, he's got good hands, he finishes well around the basket. He's never been a perimeter shooter at this point in his career but he's a great young player. He could also develop into a real key player for us."

But the key to going deep into the playoffs and a trip to the national tournament will be the defense the Magic can conjure up.

"In the past I've had some really good offensive teams here," said Albrecht. "But, the most offensive team we ever had here - hardly any of them got to the national tournament or won a regional. We always ran into a team that outscored us on a night where they were really hot. We scored but we could not hold them down. Defense will be our card to get us to any dance we want to go to."

Height, Depth To Bolster Women's Basketball Squad

With half the roster at 5'9" or taller (two over six feet tall), the St. Louis Community College - Meramec women's basketball team will use that altitude to its advantage this season in search of its second Region XVI title in three years.

"We've got some depth at height now and we can take the ball inside and force it at people a little bit.," said sixth year head coach **Steve Jarvis**. "We're going to try to go inside first and we've got some people who can finish in there."

Freshman centers **Courtney Rodgers** (Northwest) and **Cynthia Abernathy** (Timberland) have the height to definitely finish. Rodgers at 6'1" and Abernathy at an even six feet will draw the defense to them in the paint and open up another option.

"But, what I think it will allow us to do is to shoot a lot better from the perimeter than we have in the past," said Jarvis. "We've got two or three people who can really shoot it and knock it down from outside. If we go inside-out I think that really helps our percentage both ways."

One of those outside shooters is sophomore captain **Lizz Tudor** (Northwest.) She knocked down 56 three pointer's last season, hitting them at a 37% clip, best on the team. Tudor also averaged nearly 10 points a game, and collected four rebounds per contest. She feels her anonymity to defenses is over.

"Last year was kind of like a spark that picked up," said Tudor. "This year everybody's going to know I'm the outside shooter so I'll be looked more as the inside-and-out instead of just outside like last year."

One spark that turned quickly into a blaze of scoring last season returns in forward captain **Michelle Senf** (Mehlville.) Senf posted outstanding freshman numbers a year ago with 13.6 points and nearly eight rebounds a game.

"Michelle did what we expected her to do last year and she had to play a lot of minutes," said coach Jarvis. "That probably hurt her scoring a little bit at times because of so many minutes that she played. But she's coming in and definitely has been a leader and going to be our go-to person right off the bat."

Other returning sophomores ready to step up the plate are guards **Jonica Booth** (Ft. Zumwalt S.), **Kelly Campbell** (Hazelwood East), and **Porscha Smith** (O'Fallon Township, IL.)

"I think I'm going to be doing some of the same things," said Smith. "Coach wants me to shoot a little more, stop going to the basket as much. I'm going to try and do that and do what he asks me to do."

One thing the entire team has done is to break into the pre-season NJCAA national rankings, earning a twenty fourth berth. Players were both flabbergasted and in awe of the recognition.

"That was very exciting when we saw it," said Smith. "At first we thought it was like twenty fourth out of just the schools that we played. Then coach said, 'that's out of the nation!' - we were very excited about that."

And, the team feels they can live up to the national spotlight on the floor. But, it will be a constantly evolving work in progress.

"From the first three weeks of practice to now it's starting to click and come together a little bit more," said Jarvis, "and we're going to have to continue to improve as the season goes along. Right now, we have high expectations."

Soccer Squads Fall By 2-1 Scores In Region XVI Title Games

Men's Team End Season In Double Overtime Defeat

Just four and a half minutes away from their second game-deciding penalty kicks in five days, the St. Louis Community College - Meramec men's soccer team fell in double overtime, 2-1 to Jefferson College Oct. 27 in the Region XVI championship game.

Jefferson College scored quickly in the first half, just ten minutes into the game. However, the Magic answered almost immediately, scoring one minute later on a goal by Zach Costello off a free kick.

The game then turned into a defensive battle with no scoring in the second half or first overtime until the game-winner off a head ball.

Meramec finished the season 17-4-1 and had a nine game win streak until their final contest. Ironically, that was the same season mark of the 2000 team, a squad that advanced to the national tournament.

Another irony was that scoring, a strength for the Magic in the regular season, became their Achilles heel the final two games. Sophomore **Ben Hamilton** (Glendale-Springfield, MO) was the team's lead scorer with 14 goals and three assists. Midfielder **Corey Kossman** (CBC) was the second lead scorer with 10 goals and six assists. Freshman forward **Ian Porta** (Marquette) had six goals and seven assists.

Reserve sophomore forward **Mike Riti** (Webster Groves) had a superb season, scoring eight goals and one assist, energizing the team with his all-out play and sliding tackles. Freshman forward **Scott Gyllenberg** (Lindbergh) also provided scoring punch with six goals and six assists.

Sophomore transfer **Ted Huels** (Kennedy) was a dominant, 6'6" center midfielder who gave opposing players fits, unsuccessfully trying to out-leap him for head balls. Huels joined the team midway through the season, and still challenged the school record of 13 assists in one season - he had ten to go with four goals.

Midfielders **Zach Costello** (Kennedy), **Steve Carenza** (Marquette), and **Matt Mantia** (Webster Groves) also contributed to the strong squad, ranked tenth nationally at the time of their season-ending loss.

Defensively, the Magic were a blanket behind a trio of sophomore backs: **Eric Fuchs** (Vianney), **Steve Jeon** (Parkway South), and **Jimmy McDonnell** (CBC.) Fuchs was honored with NJCAA National Player Of The Week honors for his outstanding play the week of Oct. 20.

Goalie tandem **Dan Kotsis** (Kennedy) and **Chris Miller** (CBC) were equally outstanding in the nets. Miller racked up a season .805 goals against average while Kotsis finishes the year with a .969 goals against average.

Kossman and Hamilton earned All-Region first team honors while Fuchs, Jeon, and Porta won second team recognition.

Third year head coach **Brian Smugala** has quietly compiled a career 46-11-4 record, an .807 winning percentage.

Women's Soccer Team Falls To N. Oklahoma, 2-1, On Late PK

Enjoying their strongest season in the last three years, the women's soccer team was eliminated in the Region XVI championship game 2-1 by second seeded Northern Oklahoma - Tonkawa Oct. 27. Top seeded Meramec, who hosted the tournament, ended their year at 11-5-1.

The Magic fell behind 1-0 in the first half, but rallied in the second half to tie the game on a **Angie Rich** (DuBourg) goal and **Meghan Thomas** (Kennedy) assist. Later in the half, a Northern Oklahoma player was pulled down in the Meramec goal box, and was awarded a penalty kick. That PK was converted and proved to be the difference in the 2-1 final score.

A day earlier, in the semi-final contest, the Magic battled nemesis Forest Park and grabbed a 1-0 halftime lead on a Meghan Thomas goal set up by **Sarah Sanguinet's** (Lafayette) assist. The second half was a highly physical donnybrook with Meramec fending off Forest Park defensively and holding onto the 1-0 win.

Haley Fox (Lindbergh) was in goal both games, earning her sixth shutout of the year in the win over Forest Park. The sophomore goalie provided excellent play in the nets for two years, far better than statistics reflected.

She shared the nets with athletic freshman **Michelle Smith** (Mehlville), who also used her ability in the field when not in the goalie position.

Thomas, a freshman, was a big part of the scoring machine for the Magic with 11 goals and 10 assists for 32 points. She formed a one-two tandem with Sarah Sanguinet, who had six goals and eight assists.

Samantha Lang (Notre Dame) tallied five goals and six assists, while sophomore **Stephanie Godfrey** (Marquette) had six goals and three assists. Sophomore Angie Rich had two goals and eight assists.

The Magic were stunned in the early part of the season by devastating, year-ending injuries to freshmen **Michelle Spencer** (Notre Dame), **Katie Jungk** (DuBourg), and **Galena Ring** (Farmington.)

Thomas, Rich, and Fox were named to the All-Region XVI first team.

The season also marked the historic three hundredth victory for head coach Jeff Karl, who now ends the season with 310 wins.

Riti Brothers Create Same Day, Soccer Double Trouble

Brothers **Mike and Tom Riti** (Webster Groves) pulled off a rare, double score on the same day again during the men's soccer season for their respective teams. On Thursday, Oct. 18, Mike Riti, a sophomore forward, scored for Meramec in a 8-0 drubbing of Florissant Valley, while Tom Riti, a senior, also scored, for Webster U. in a 4-2 win. Tom played his first two seasons at Meramec before transferring to Webster.

It was the third time this past season that the Riti brothers pulled off the dual scoring feat on the same day.

Volleyball Magic Set To Host Region XVI Tourney Nov. 2-3

As in most sports, the playoffs are a new season and a golden opportunity for redemption. The volleyball Magic will hope to advantage of the new life when they open Region XVI Tournament play Friday evening at 7:00 against Cottey College. Meramec will host the entire tourney.

The fifth seeded Magic take on fourth seeded Cottey, who narrowly edged Meramec in a three game mini-match Sept. 22. A first game 29-31 loss put Meramec at a deficit they didn't recover from.

The winner of Friday's match will then take on top seed Longview Saturday (Nov. 3) morning at 10:00 a.m. Longview thrashed the Magic 12-30, 2-30 in September.

Meramec (14-24) does have a bit of momentum, having won its next to last match in the regular season over Harris-Stowe.

And, middle hitter **Leana Proetz** (Pacific) and **Julianne Seebeck** (Oakville) were recently named to the first team All-Conference squad. Setter **Sarah Greenlee** (Herculaneum) won honorable mention All-Conference.

Proetz has been a prolific blocker for the Magic, and is second nationally among junior colleges Div. II with a 1.745 blocks per game average.

Knierim Highlights Initial Inductees Into Region XVI Hall Of Fame

Former St. Louis Comm. College - Meramec softball coach **Celeste Knierim** has been tabbed as an inductee into the new Region XVI Hall Of Fame.

"I've spent my entire life and career, 30 years of my life, in Region XVI so to be voted in by the people I played against is an honor," said Knierim.

Knierim, during her 30 legendary years at Meramec, won 1,040 games (1040-544-2), 23 conference championships, 16 Region XVI titles, and earned 13 top ten finishes at the NJCAA National Tournament, including two national runner-up trophies. She retired following the 2004 season.

Meramec's Frischmann Enjoys Slice Of Baseball History

For Meramec Sports Information Director **Bob Frischmann**, his four hours on the field at T.R. Hughes Stadium in O'Fallon recently may translate into his 15 minutes of proverbial fame.

Frischmann umpired a portion of what became the world's longest baseball game ever, as certified by the Guinness Book Of World Records. Umpiring both the bases and home plate at various times from 5-9 p.m. on Saturday evening, Oct. 13, he will enter the famous book of world records along with all players and umpires.

The marathon lasted over 32 hours, eclipsing the previous record by over two hours. Frischmann, a veteran umpire with the Greater St. Louis Association of Umpires, was asked to sign a maple wood bat along with all players and umpires. The bat has been requested for display by the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y.