

Basketball Season Culminates In Historic Milestones

Perhaps the STLCC-Meramec Magic men's and women's basketball teams have been saving their best for last. In their final season as teams based at Meramec and known as the Magic, both squads have set multiple program marks.

The women's team, started in 1973 but discontinued between 1980 and 1996, has enjoyed a stellar campaign in its 20th overall season. When the Magic upended Lindenwood Belleville in the regular season and home finale on Feb. 23 they set a new record for most wins in a season with 23, running their record to a superb 23-4. Meramec is led by second year head coach **Shelly Ethridge** and assistant coach **Melanie Marcy**.

The Magic have also clinched a new mark for fewest losses - the most games Meramec could lose as they enter the playoffs would be five, shattering the previous season low of seven losses in a year set in 1976-'77 and matched the following season in 1977-'78.

While not a record, the men's basketball squad under 34th year head coach **Randy Albrecht** ended the regular season with a equally superb 24-6 record and a 11 game win streak, just four wins shy of the single season wins record (28) that is still possible in the post season. The men's team also won the conference (MCCAC) championship for the first time since 1980. The program debuted with the Meramec campus in 1965.

The culmination of both Magic teams' success came on Feb. 23 in the regular season finale against Lindenwood-Belleville. Both teams won hard fought games, pulling out the wins in the final minutes. When the men closed out their win with sophomore guard **Dietrick Sooter** (Pierce City) scoring a layup for the final points ever in the Meramec gym, a new mark was created.

For the first time in Meramec history, both the men's and women's teams went undefeated at home, racking up a combined 31-0. In an impromptu show of unity, both the men's and women's teams met at center court forming a circle around the green "M" on the floor and did one final victory dance together in celebration of their flawless home mark.

Women's Magic Heads To KC As Region XVI #1 Seed

Hungry for even more wins, the Meramec women's basketball team heads to Kansas City and host site Penn Valley for the Region XVI Tournament Mar. 3-4. The winner of the event advances to the NJCAA National Tournament Mar. 15-19 at Illinois Central College in East Peoria, IL. That event features a 16 team field.

The Magic will open post season play as the region's top seed on Friday, Mar. 4, taking on fourth seeded Penn Valley who squeezed past Florissant Valley in opening round

action 83-81 on Feb. 26. In the other semi-final, second seed North Central Missouri College plays third seed Cottey College, who breezed past STLCC-Forest Park in opening round action to advance. The title game will be on Saturday, Mar. 5.

The team is led by sophomore center **Kasei Evans** (Hazelwood Central), a 6'0" almost unstoppable force in the paint who is averaging 17 points a game. Also leading the charge is recent NJCAA Player Of The Week, **TeeTee Johnson** (Hazelwood Central) who is averaging 13 points a game along with solid overall play.

Sophomore forward **Courtney Panus** (Pattonville) is scoring 9 ½ points per contest, while guard **Sherie Cole** (Hazelwood Central) is tossing in 8.33 a game for a well-rounded offensive attack. Interestingly, the Magic's top four scorers all hail from the Suburban North prep conference.

Men's Hoops Looks For First Region Crown Since '05

The men's basketball team heads even farther for its playoff hunt than the women's squad, venturing to North Central Missouri College in Trenton, MO, a little over an hour north of Kansas City in rural Missouri.

The Magic will open play on Friday, Mar. 4 at 5:00 taking on the winner of Tuesday's (Mar. 1) play-in game between fourth seed STLCC-Forest Park and fifth seed STLCC-Florissant Valley. In the other semi-final, second seed Penn Valley battles third seed and tourney host North Central Missouri. The championship game is slated for Saturday afternoon, Mar. 5. The winner of the region moves on to the NJCAA National Tournament Mar. 15-19 in Danville, IL.

The Magic will be without sophomore guard **Dietrick Sooter** (Pierce City, MO) who fractured his wrist in the final game of the regular season Feb. 23. Sooter, a high-energy player with a flair for hitting big shots and winning games in the final minutes, enjoyed two great highlight-filled seasons for Meramec.

The All-Conference team, recently announced, has a trio of Magic players on its list. Freshman center **Ryun Davis** (McCluer North) and **Regis Schafer** (Brazil) were named to the first team while sophomore forward **Alen Hadzimahovic** (Fox) earned honorable mention status.

North Central can be a difficult venue for a visitor to win in - one of the Magic's six losses came there at the hands of the Pirates Jan. 15 in a 65-63 cliffhanger. Another historical note for the Magic to be wary of - if they face fourth seed Forest Park in the semi-finals, Meramec will be trying to avoid a repeat upset that the Highlanders pulled off over Meramec in 2007 in the regional semi-finals.

Baseball Magic Wait For Better Weather To 'Play Ball!'

The call of spring and the start of the baseball season is always disguised in the form of several late winter snowstorms - this season is no different as the Magic wait for the first official pitch of the season to be thrown.

That first pitch may very well happen on Tuesday, Mar. 1 when the Magic head a few hours south to face Three Rivers in Poplar Bluff, MO in a doubleheader. Meramec will make its home debut on Saturday, Mar. 5 in a doubleheader starting at noon, followed by a Sunday double dip, also beginning at noon. Optimism is in the air for ninth year head coach **Tony Dattoli**.

"We're good in all the right places - we're good on the mound, defensively we're very sound," said Dattoli. "We're very young, I have a feeling we'll make a lot of mistakes but we're very athletic and at the plate I think we're going to produce a lot of runs."

Young is the theme for the 2011 edition of the Magic - they will start up to 7 freshmen among the 9 players on the field. The only returning starting veterans among position players will be catcher **Ben Smith** (Rockwood Summit), and platooning outfielders **Nate Young** (Lee's Summit North) and **Vince Howard** (Sikeston).

"Our athleticism itself is tremendous," said Dattoli. "That should bode well on the defensive side because we'll have the speed and the agility to defend most of the bunt plays and the hit-and-run, and I think, more importantly, just make the routine play."

Dattoli's projected batting order and lineup features **Dylan Roe** (CBC) in centerfield, **Vince Howard** in left field, **Ben Smith** behind the plate, **Larry Schimsa** (Pacific) at third base, **Coby Chadick** (Blue Valley NW, Overland Park, KS) in right, **Clayton Gibbons** (Kennett, MO High) at first base, **Shawn Crump** (Festus) as the designated hitter, **James Sharp** (Liberty High, Summersville, MO) at second base, and **Phillip Landwehr** (Borgia) at shortstop.

The Magic will find its experience and veterans on the mound in the form of four, solid starting pitchers. With no set order to the rotation, sophomores **Hank Williams, Jr.** (Fort Zumwalt South), **Brett Wolf** (St. Mary's), and **Nate Goeke** (Kirkwood). Williams looks to be the horse of the rotation, a 6'2", 190 lb. right-hander who throws in the low 90's.

"His (Williams) pitching ability is very good, he can pitch," said Dattoli. "He throws three pitches for strikes, is able to command the zone pretty well. But, make no mistake; his number one pitch is his fastball."

The Magic definitely have size in their pitching. Lefthander **Brett Wolf** is 6'5" and weighs in at 220 lb. Wolf feels his off season conditioning has put his tall frame in a position for success.

"My arm feels great so far this year," said Wolf, who was also an academic honoree at

President's Cup Night. "I feel 20 times better than I did last year. Everything feels great so far. I've been working out a lot and trying to stay in shape as best as possible and I feel like I'm in the best shape I've ever been in for a long time."

While the rest of the pitching staff will fall into place based on performance, Dattoli says the early front runners for the closer's job out of the bullpen will be **Charles Fallert** (St. Dominic) and **Zach Mesey** (Sullivan). Spot starters will include lefty **Mike Krumm** (Lutheran South), **Andrew Reidt** (Pacific), and **Cody Kennedy** (Patton, MO). Wolf feels the freshman competition will be good for sophomore hurlers like himself.

"I still think there is competition among us to make sure we're doing our best possible and if one of us falls there may be a freshman that steps up and takes our spot," said Wolf. "There's always pressure to perform and if you don't then you're not going to be where you want to be."

With a largely new cast of freshmen, Dattoli's focus toward the season in general is a simple one.

"We try to teach them at the moment, it's within your grasp every day," said Dattoli. "Just work and improve your game every day. If you can improve your game every day, when it really counts at the end of the season you should be peaking."

Re-Match With Region XVI Rival To Open Softball Season

The softball squad will start their 2011 campaign taking on the team they finished the 2010 season against in the Region XVI championship game - Mineral Area. While that outcome a year was not to the Magic's liking, they were the surprise squad of the tournament as a low seed. Second year head coach Kim McCall hopes to springboard off that success on Tuesday, Mar. 1 when they take on the Cardinals in a 2:00 doubleheader in Farmington.

"I hope that we start off the season strong and build from the momentum that we had last year," said McCall. "We have a lot of revenge and we'd like to use that momentum to hopefully have a better outcome this time."

The doubleheader, if rained out, may be moved to Wednesday. But, the Magic are ready, weather or not, to get the season started with a "lucky" 13 player roster.

"I see a lot of consistency right now at the plate," said McCall. "I believe we have a solid top seven right now - I see a lot of good things happening for us now on offense. We've got a couple holes right now for us to fill but people are stepping up right now into those spots."

The Magic have a trio of returning players in third baseman **Kayla Mahoney** (Fox), first baseman **Nicole Molly** (Seckman), and centerfielder **Patsi Huebner** (Washington, MO). McCall looks for Mahoney to take charge of the hot corner.

“She’s a strong glove at third,” said McCall. “Her bat’s come around, we tried a couple different stances with her and we finally got it to where we want it. She’s going to be a solid hitter for us; hopefully drive in some RBI’s if we can get runners on base before her. I hope and look for good things to come from her.”

McCall is equally high on Molly as a first baseman and as a hitter. Last season, Molly hit a solid .309 with 24 RBI’s and scored 21 runs. McCall feels those numbers are just the tip of the iceberg.

“She’s (Molly) a very, very strong hitter and is looking to be our number three batter,” said McCall. “She’s got a good glove at first. With her maturity as a sophomore she’s a great leader not so much for vocal reasons but based on her performance. I see a very strong future for her as well.”

Regarding centerfielder Patsi Huebner, McCall sees a new game out of her at the plate, but the same old speed out of her patrolling the outfield.

“Patsi was very young last year and not knowing the slapping game so once we taught it to her she became versatile real quick with the slap swing and her speed,” said McCall. “On offense we’ve taught her a couple of different ways to get on base with her slapping game and she does it very well. This year we’ve taught her to be more versatile at the plate. On defense she tracks down almost every ball in the outfield hit to her and does a great job out there.”

The bulk of the pitching will be split between freshmen **Dani Whitehead** (Incarnate Word) and lefthander **Lauren Menning** (Kennedy), a player who went out for Rutgers softball NCAA Division I team and later attended classes at St. Louis University. Menning is still a freshman, eligibility-wise. Also available for pitching duty is freshman **Erin Riley** (Trinity).

After a long several weeks of indoor practices, the Magic is ready to get outside and play. “I see a lot of competitiveness and drive in every single one of our players,” said McCall. “They’re hungry - they’re hungry to get on the field and they’re hungry to start the season off.”