CROSS COUNTRY EMERGES AS A REGIONAL, NATIONAL POWER

A return to national prominence for the Linfield cross country program took another big leap this fall. The Linfield men’s team placed second at the Northwest Conference championships and fourth at the NCAA Division III West Region meet, their highest showings since the Wildcats transitioned from NAIA to the NCAA 10 years ago.

Finishing as the conference runner-up, the men demonstrated tangible evidence of Linfield’s climb back to the upper echelon of the conference.

Three Wildcats – two men and one woman – competed at the NCAA Division III championships in Northfield, Minn.

Racing in her first national-championship meet, sophomore Marci Klimek emerged from a crowded field of 280 women’s runners to finish 68th in 22 minutes, 43 seconds. Klimek’s result equaled the highest finish by a Linfield woman in national competition since the program transitioned since 1998.

In the men’s NCAA championship race, senior Shawn Pollard earned the highest finish for a Linfield man in NCAA competition, claiming 118th place in 25:55. He was the fifth Northwest Conference runner to cross the finish line, improving upon his eighth place result at the NWC championships.

Making his second straight NCAA championship appearance, Harrison Wilson improved his overall standing from 187th last season to 177th. He covered the eight-kilometer course in 26:13. He was the seventh-highest NWC finisher.

In addition to Pollard and Wilson, Linfield was represented on the men’s all-West Region teams by Shawn Fisher, Chris McIssac and Jesse Davis.

For the women, freshman Erika Snawder earned all-conference and all region recognition during her first season in the program. Casey Stepan, who raced to a 12th-place showing at the conference championships, joined Snawder and Klimek on the all-conference team.

FOOTBALL

Though the offense was showcased early on, it was the defense that the 2007 season may best be remembered for.

After giving up 72 points during its first two games, the defense steadily improved, holding its last four opponents to a combined six points. Linfield finished the year ranked first in the NWC in total defense and total offense, the two major benchmarks of statistical success.

For the second straight year, Linfield finished with an overall record of 6-3, extending the program’s national record of consecutive winning seasons to 52.

But for the second time in as many years, the Wildcats were runners-up in the NWC, falling by less than a touchdown to eventual champion Whitworth. Linfield’s 4-2 NWC record included a last-second 33-32 defeat to Willamette, which hadn’t beaten the ‘Cats in seven previous tries.

“I thought we played well enough to win both those games,” said second-year coach Joe Smith. “We just needed to make a few more plays than we did.”

Indeed, the Wildcats outgained both Whitworth and Willamette in total yards. But five costly interceptions in the Whitworth game, and the inability to contain Willamette’s intricate offense in the fourth quarter, denied the Wildcats their goal of capturing a seventh NWC title in eight seasons.
Honoring former greats in football, baseball, basketball, track and volleyball, Linfield inducted its 10th Athletics Hall of Fame class Saturday, Nov. 10, at Ted Wilson Gymnasium.

Sponsored by AT&T, the annual Hall of Fame banquet followed the Wildcat football team’s 66-0 season-ending victory over Lewis & Clark at nearby Maxwell Field.

Ten individuals were inducted — including four All-Americans and the third member of the Rutschman family — bringing the total membership of the Hall of Fame to 90 individuals and seven teams.

More than 200 people attended. Inductees, and some comments from their acceptance speeches:

Bret Bailey class of 1982, earned all-conference honors three times in baseball (outfielder) and once in football (linebacker) and helped Linfield win Northwest Conference championships in both sports. Bailey was chosen the Wildcats’ Most Valuable Player twice in baseball and Defensive Player of the Year in football.

In his acceptance speech, Bailey said the award was really “about some great people who were involved in my life and gave me great opportunities athletically and academically.” He named numerous teammates in both sports “who surrounded me with talent and support.”

Jay Buse ’75, a second team NAIA football All-American defensive end and second-team Associated Press Little All-American in 1974. Buse started every game of his three seasons at Linfield and was all-NWC and Little all-Coast all three seasons and selected by his teammates as best defensive player all three seasons.

In his acceptance speech, Buse said the award was really “the result of a sum of all the people involved, all their interest and support bound together into ‘strands’ to create the “rope” of his teams’ successes.

Dave Craven ’88, the fourth-leading men’s basketball scorer in Linfield history. He was chosen all-conference three times and was conference Player of the Year in 1988.

Athletic director Scott Carnahan ’73 said Craven had one of “the most impact basketball careers” ever at Linfield. “As Dave went, the Wildcats went,” Carnahan said.

Among those thanked by Craven was current Linfield men’s basketball coach Larry Doty ’78, “who taught me that no matter what you have accomplished, you can always get better.”

Dave Freundschuh ’82, whose school and Northwest Conference records in track’s 100-meter dash have stood for 27 years. He won five conference sprint championships and was chosen NAIA District track and field Athlete of the Year in 1980.

Freundschuh said his induction in the Linfield Athletics Hall of Fame “means more than any other awards could say.”

Doug Hire ’87, a starter on two national championship football teams and a first-team NAIA All-American offensive guard in 1986. Hire is now associate athletic director and associate head football coach and offensive line coach at Linfield.

Ad Rutschman ’53, Hire’s coach and presenter, said he “came to us a rough nugget and left a polished gem, as a player and a person.”

Hire said the opportunity to play for a national championship and coach Rutschman’s interest in him brought him to Linfield. “Coach Rutschman has had an impact on so many lives and I am lucky to be one of those,” Hire said.

Susan (Holm) Allsop ’84, who helped the Wildcats earn second place in the 1981 national small-college women’s volleyball tournament, earning All-America honors in the process. She played on two conference and one regional championship team, and led the 1981 national tournament in aces.

Allsop recounted her “fabulous experience with the great group of ladies” on her team. She named a number of coaches and teachers who “all made a difference and showed me what kind of a person and teacher I wanted to be.”

Jim Massey ’72, a football halfback who is on Linfield’s career top-10 rushing lists in four categories. He helped the Wildcats win or share three conference championships in...
Linfield "still" is a place that is satisfying to most. Most recently, Linfield was identified as having the highest retention rate of like-minded colleges in the West. It was also noted that we have the highest graduation rate as well. What this tells me is that the students who are here are enjoying their experience. Nearly all of the ones who stay, finish their degrees.

In my last edition of Carney’s Corner, I cited several examples of the ways previous donations to Athletics and the Top Cat Club have helped all our different programs. Many of you give a donation each and every year that, quite frankly, we depend on very much to keep our programs going and moving forward.

I know that all of you are called and written as I am for support of Linfield. What I want you to realize is how important your donations are to us. In a recent accounting, the number of people this year who have donated specifically to athletics is down, but the amount they have given is close to the same. Your donation will help support any of the unbudgeted athletic department needs for the 443 student-athletes who participate in our men’s and women’s programs.

If you haven’t already done so, I hope you will consider joining the TopCat Club this year. More information about the TopCat Club is available on the Athletics Web site at www.linfield.edu/sports/topcat.php. I hope you will consider sending a contribution to the Linfield Athletic Department, Unit A440, 900 SE Baker Street, McMinnville, Oregon 97128.

Thank you for your continued interest and support and for giving of your time, talents, and resources to keep our athletic traditions strong. On behalf of our coaches and staff, I sincerely hope you have a great holiday season.

Sincerely,

Scott Carnahan ’73
Director of Athletics
Fall Sports, continued from Page 1

After dropping a 32-20 nonconference game to Division II Western Oregon, the Wildcats outlasted Hardin-Simmons 52-42 in a shootout at Maxwell Field that featured an astounding combined 1,119 yards. Wildcats quarterback Trevor Scharer set a Linfield single-game record with 555 yards of total offense, throwing for six TDs.

Then came the shocking loss to Willamette. It was a game in which the Wildcats led 19-0 early in the second quarter, only to fall on a last-gasp 42-yard field goal with four seconds to play.

From there, Linfield reeled off four straight wins, including lopsided shutout victories over NWC foes Puget Sound (37-0) and Pacific Lutheran (24-0).

After thumping Menlo 37-6 in California, the Wildcats traveled to Spokane, Wash., to face a senior-laden Whitworth team. The Wildcats outgained the Pirates in total yards, 323-239, but turned the ball over five times, including three interceptions in the fourth quarter, in a 10-6 loss.

Twenty-four seniors played their final games in Linfield uniforms during a 66-0 blowout of Lewis & Clark to end the season.

“I’m sure our seniors found their football experience to be a great classroom where they had the opportunity to learn some success skills,” said Smith, himself a product of the Linfield football program.

The success of the 2007 season team corresponded to more than just wins and losses.

“The No. 1 thing that impressed me was the way our players behaved, on and off the field,” said Smith. “The class and character they demonstrated throughout the season was better than any team we have had in recent years. I was very pleased with how hard the team worked both during the season and in the offseason. Their preparation and effort were quite strong.”

VOLLEYBALL

Falling just a few wins short of their goal of repeating as Northwest Conference champion, the Linfield Wildcats nonetheless came away feeling good about their season.

With a 10-6 record in conference play, the Wildcats were slotted third in the final league standings behind champion Pacific Lutheran and runner-up Puget Sound. Linfield put together a 15-10 overall record, its fourth winning campaign in the last five years.

After going 6-2 over the first half of the conference slate, the Wildcats finished 4-4 down the stretch.

“Our inconsistency from game-to-game and match-to-match really hurt us,” said Wildcats’ coach Shane Kimura. “We would play great during one game or match, then not so great the next time out.”

Seniors Katelyn Baker, Molly Taylor and Lisa Brocard were the heart and soul of the team that battled through illness and injury to again contend for the league crown.

Baker enjoyed a remarkable senior season, earning first team all-NWC and all-West Region honors. She ranked second in the conference in kills (4.75/game) and hitting percentage (.346).

Taylor, who was forced to miss six matches while recovering from an illness, finished among the top 10 NWC players in hitting percentage.

Though not ranking among the league leaders in any statistical category, Brocard provided a measure of stability and leadership to a team that graduated two All-Americans the previous year.

Also contributing to the Wildcats’ success were Emily Vuylsteke, Meghan Flink and Kelsey French. Vuylsteke was an honorable mention all-NWC performer at middle blocker. She ranked third on the team in kills (2.31) while leading the club in blocks (0.73). French was the Wildcats’ second-leading hitter (2.40) and third-leading digger (2.63). Flink, the Wildcats’ defensive specialist, ranked second on the team in digs (2.93) behind libero Rachael Rahn.

Flink, an accounting major with a 3.96 grade point average, earned distinction as a second team CoSIDA Academic all-District 8 selection.

Setter Stephanie Purser, in her first full season as a starter, passed out 1,049 assists, the fifth-highest single-season total in program history.

“I was pleased with the season,” said Kimura. “Going in, we knew it was going to be a real challenge. Looking back, we had some real tough five-set matches that could have gone either way. We ended up winning most of those and that says a lot about the character of the girls.”

WOMEN’S SOCCER

With a 6-11-2 overall record and a 5-10-1 mark in the NWC, the 2007 season was mixed with moments of inconsistency and glimpses of promise. Fielding a team without any seniors, second-year coach Melanie Langley led the ‘Cats to a sixth-place NWC finish.

After an 0-2 start to begin conference play, the Wildcats won three of their next four matches, the lone loss coming at the hands of nationally ranked Puget Sound. The winning streak was capped off by a victory over longtime NWC powerhouse Willamette. Linfield’s 3-0 victory over the Bearcats was the first win over Willamette in program history and a season-defining moment.

After an encouraging 4-4 start in conference play, inconsistent play resulted in just one win over the final eight contests.
Fall Sports, continued from Page 4

Even with her team’s second-half struggles, Langley took away many positives and remains encouraged for what is to come. Linfield was led by two honorable mention NWC all-stars in junior midfielder Kate Franklin and freshman goalkeeper Kelsey Hasselblad. Franklin finished with one goal and two assists on the season. Hasselblad emerged as a vocal leader for the ‘Cats. She played every minute of every match in goal, finishing second in the NWC in saves with 123.

Rennika Doty, Kendra Newell, Kelli Gillespie, and Martha Inouye anchored a defense that was tested all year.

Freshman Sara Blake became a key component during her first season, finding a way to contribute each and every contest. Blake shared the team lead with 11 points, finishing with four goals and three assists.

Midfielder Steph Caster finished with 11 points and five goals, while Emma Triplett had four goals and three assists. Veterans Amber Calcagno and Kim Skelly played big roles in the midfield. Calcagno led the team with two game-winning goals. Skelly had two goals and two assists.

MEN’S SOCCER

With a 6-0 victory over George Fox on the final day of the season, Linfield and first-year head coach Ian Lefebvre clinched the Wildcats' ninth straight winning season. The ‘Cats finished the 2007 campaign with an overall record of 9-8-1 and a 5-8-1 clip in Northwest Conference play. The record was good for sixth place in the final conference standings.

The Wildcats went through an up-and-down season with many highs and lows. Linfield opened up the 2007 season in dramatic fashion with a 1-0 win over 10th-ranked UC-Santa Cruz on their way to a 4-0 start to begin the season. Three of the first four wins came by shutout.

Unfortunately, the Wildcats couldn’t sustain their momentum once they reached conference play. The ‘Cats opened up the NWC slate with three straight losses, dealing a huge setback to their hopes of a conference title. After the four-game streak to start the year, Linfield would win back-to-back contests just once more.

Senior defender Chris Nicoletti headlined a list of four Wildcats who earned all-conference recognition. In addition to Nicoletti’s first team accolade, freshman Michael Camacho, sophomore Travis Issacs and senior Spencer Hunter earned honorable mention in a vote of the NWC’s nine coaches.

In his first year as the starting goalie Mike Belzberg was sensational. The junior goalkeeper tallied a conference best 107 saves, while adding seven shutouts.

Nicoletti and Hunter were aided by junior defender Joe Murray, who played a key role in the defensive effort. Hunter also added two goals and two assists over the year.

Issacs, Jacob Burger and Kurtis Wong led the team with 10 points each. Both Issacs and Burger scored four goals and dished out two assists for the year. Wong had a team-high four assists, while scoring three goals of his own.

Camacho brought great playmaking ability to the team all year, scoring three goals, including the game-winner over UC-Santa Cruz, and finished with two assists. Freshmen Kevin Donato and Roland Mason saw action over the course of the season.

Veterans Andy Sharp and Bryan Alford provided stability in the midfield. Alford tallied three assists and one goal, while Sharp scored two and assisted on another.

Senior Brice Lang and junior Nick Jauregui were regular contributors at the forward position. Both ended with three goals, with Jauregui adding three assists and Lang tallying one assist.

MEN’S GOLF

Linfield won the NWC Fall Classic for the second year in a row and Linfield sophomore Tyler Nelson was runner-up in individual standings.

The Wildcats’ four lowest scorers shot an aggregate 604 strokes at Spokane Country Club, four fewer than defending NWC champion and host Whitworth.

Prior to the Fall Classic, the Wildcats either won or tied for top honors at each of five NWC South Division Five-Way tournaments.

Final standings are determined on points. Each team gets one point for each other team it finishes ahead of in the Fall and Spring Classic tournaments and two points for each team it finishes ahead of in the final conference tournament in April. Linfield will go into the spring in first place with eight points.

WOMEN’S GOLF

Wildcats freshman Brynn Hurdus burst onto the Northwest Conference golf scene, winning the Fall Classic at Wildhorse Resort near Pendleton. Hurdus shot a two-day total of 159 to win the event by four strokes.

Linfield placed fourth at the Fall Classic with a combined total of 712.

Hurdus also earned medalist honors in three of four NWC South Division Five-Way tournaments.
MEN’S BASKETBALL

Never mind that the Linfield men’s basketball team has no returning starters and just four letterwinners from last season’s team that finished 3-13 in the Northwest Conference standings and 8-17 overall.

A radical influx of new personnel means the Wildcats will be better in 2007-08, as much a result of the players who did not return as the ones who took their places.

Coach Larry Doty, starting his 21st season in McMinnville, aims to resuscitate a once-proud program that won 15 NWC titles over the last 50 years, the most recent in 2001.

Two transfers, a talented big man and a collection of unselfish contributors have Doty reinstating his “88x44” self-substitution system. The system relies on fast-break baskets and baseline-to-baseline defense with players going full tilt for short bursts. Teammates check into games for one another at predetermined intervals, keeping fresh bodies on the floor at all times.

On the floor, the team will be directed by point guards Jon Weber and Cody Tesoro. Weber shot 57 percent from the field and averaged 2.8 assists in nine games last season after being called up from the junior varsity. Tesoro, a transfer from Western Oregon, brings a scorer’s mentality to the point. Like Weber, he’s a strong defender as well.

A number of possibilities exist at shooting guard, where captain Steve Taylor is the likely starter. A proven scorer, Taylor is vital to the team’s success, serving as player-coach on the floor. Letterman Drew Schroeder, now fully recovered from nagging injuries, and newcomers Bubba Lemon, Austin Hunt and Joel Paul are also in the mix.

Letterman Brian Murphy and transfer Erik Olson give the Wildcats a formidable pair at the forward spot. Murphy returns to the court after being sidelined with an injury for all of last season. Olson spent two seasons playing at Wisconsin-River Falls before transferring to Linfield in the fall. Letterman Ryan Chisolm or J.V. import Jeff Stoefen are also vying for playing time on the front line.

Perhaps the most intriguing addition to the roster is at center, where 6-8 freshman K.C. Wiser should emerge as a commanding presence in the paint at both ends of the floor.

The NWC will be tough from top to bottom, Doty predicts. Lewis & Clark, Whitworth and Puget Sound are the preseason favorites. Linfield was picked in the NWC preseason poll to finish eighth.

WOMEN’S BASKETBALL

Is a return trip to the Northwest Conference playoffs in the cards for the Linfield Wildcats in 2007-08?

Coach Robyn Stewart believes it’s possible.

“Our goal is to get back to the playoffs,” said Stewart on the eve of her 11th season. “But for us to get there, our freshmen and transfers are going to have to play as well as our juniors and seniors. We really need a solid 8-10 player rotation that can rebound and play defense.”

The Wildcats are coming off a breakthrough season in which they shared third place in the NWC and clinched a berth in the conference playoffs, their first since 2000.

Seven returners, two community college transfers and a half-dozen freshmen make up the roster that is brimming with potential.

Stewart plans to take full advantage of all nine non-conference games prior to the start of league play in early January. Including skirmishes with Eastern Oregon, Warner Pacific and Oregon Tech, Stewart calls her nonconference slate “challenging. Our schedule gives us the opportunity to grow together and get everybody on the same page.”

The offense revolves around Brihtani Lassiter, whom Stewart considers one of the top point guards in the NWC. Lassiter came on strong at the end of last season, steering the ’Cats to five wins in their final six regular-season games. Now a senior, the Wildcats will rely heavily on her for scoring, ball distribution and timely steals. Also capable of running the point are senior Casey Stepan, normally a shooting guard, and freshman Stephanie Fennimore.

A crowded field is competing for time at the other guard spot, with returning letterwinners Stepan, Marissa Lindquist and Susan O’Meara fending off challenges from freshmen Briana Reichelt, Kayla Hubrich, and Amanda Nichols. Monica Chock, who sat out all of last season, is also available off the bench.

With two exceptions, Linfield is young across the front line. Kate Stadeli, a 6-1 center, should see the lion’s share of minutes in the middle. Junior forward Courtney McFadden, who saw action in all 25 games last season, is the probable starter at forward. Freshmen Sarah Amina, Emily Shoemaker and community college transfers Jenni Carlos and Lindsey Marsaw are pressing McFadden for a share of playing time.

George Fox, last season’s co-champion, is the overwhelming favorite to win the conference crown. Picked to finish fifth by the conference’s coaches, Linfield will contend for one of three playoff berth with six other clubs with playoff aspirations.
SWIMMING

It’s a three-team race once again in Northwest Conference men’s swimming, with Linfield battling frontrunners Whitworth and Puget Sound for the top spot.

Earning second place with a strong push at last season’s NWC championships, the Wildcats are expected to pick up where they left off. The bulk of the roster returns, including All-American Dominic Rieniets and defending NWC champions Kevin Caple and Yusuke Kobayashi. Josh Parfitt, a runner-up in two individual events, is also back.

Adding the Linfield’s depth are lettermen Mark Carder (1,650 freestyle) and Kent Bonacki (backstroke, freestyle). Newcomers Conor Moynihan (freestyle, backstroke), Leighton Hao (sprint free, backstroke), and Alex Bruey (freestyle, backstroke) should also be regular contributors.

Linfield’s potent 800 freestyle relay, featuring Parfitt, Rieniets, Caple and Kobayashi, has national-meet potential. The foursome set a school record last winter and were on the doorstep of qualifying for the NCAA Division III championships.

“Our goals this season are to qualify our relay for nationals and develop our overall team depth,” said Wildcats coach Gary Gutierrez. “Where we end up in the NWC will depend largely on how well our second tier of kids perform.”

Linfield’s women were slotted fifth at last season’s NWC championships and need stellar performances to maintain that position.

Just 11 women comprise the roster, making a run at a top-three finish very difficult. The graduation of school-record holder Andrea Thomas adversely affected the Wildcats’ point-scoring ability.

“Our goal is to try and hang on to fifth place,” said Gutierrez. “Though we lost Andrea, our other girls are going to have to step up. It’s a matter of training hard and going out and competing with some spirit.”

Rose Hollingsworth, a national-meet competitor in the backstroke last year, is one of just four letterwinners returning.

After earning honorable mention All-America distinction as a sophomore, Hollingsworth now “has a target on her back,” said Gutierrez. “She’s not likely going to shake things up like she did last year. Our goals for Rose are to have her win conference and qualify for nationals again.”

Freshman Lauren Anderson should blossom into an outstanding competitor in the freestyle, IM and butterfly events, according to Gutierrez. “She’s getting better each time out.”

Also counted on for scoring this season are co-captain Amy Goodloe (distance freestyle), Felicia Weller (butterfly, IM), and Christina Nakamura (freestyle, backstroke).

“Our women are very supportive and enthusiastic,” said Gutierrez. “They are solid as a unit.”

Kevin Caple ’08

IN COMPLIANCE

Amy Dames Smith
NCAA Compliance Officer

Several years ago, NCAA Division III institutions eliminated the traditional practice of redshirting. Redshirting was phased out because it was not seen as being in line with Division III philosophy. Currently, the only way for a Division III student-athlete to extend their playing careers to five seasons is to qualify for a medical hardship waiver. A medical hardship waiver can only be granted if a season-ending injury occurred and is certified by the NWC Commissioner after a formal request by the student-athlete. While the process for applying for a medical hardship waiver can be tedious, Linfield is usually granted several such waivers granted each year to members of different teams.

Essentially, if a student-athlete competes and/or practices after the first official date of competition, he or she has used a season of participation. This rule allows athletes to participate in preseason scrimmages and practices without using one of their four seasons.

What if, for example, a football player is on the roster for the first contest of his season, warms up with the team, but does not get any playing time? During the game, he decides to quit. Has he used up a season of eligibility? No, he has not. Since he didn’t compete or practice after the first game, his season is still intact.

Several times a year at Linfield, a student-athlete practices and competes during the non-traditional segment but then doesn’t turn out for the traditional segment in the same year. Has he or she used a season of participation? Yes. Competition during the non-traditional segment makes up the use of a season of participation.

There are many other scenarios that may come up, but these are some likely ones. NCAA regulations require communication amongst the compliance officer, student-athletes, and coaches to make sure we all stay in compliance!
SAFETY AND COST CONCERNS
SPUR PURCHASE OF BUS

Don’t be surprised if one day while traveling along Interstate 84 through the Columbia Gorge, you spot a brightly colored tour bus with “Linfield College Wildcats” emblazoned on the side. The 58-passenger bus is probably transporting one of Linfield’s 19 varsity sports teams on its way to or from a competition.

Safety, cost savings and flexibility were the primary reasons for purchasing the previously owned 1996 Setra highway coach. While the athletic department already owned and maintained one 45-passenger touring coach, there were often times when more than one team was traveling on a given weekend.

College policy now requires the use of a bus when more than two vans are needed to transport teams and their equipment, said Linfield director of athletics Scott Carnahan.

“For longer overnight trips, traveling by bus is a much safer way to go,” Carnahan said.

Larger programs, such as the football, baseball, swimming, soccer and track teams, require bus transport due to the size of their rosters. All other programs will have the opportunity to use the bus for overnight trips.

Leasing buses and paying for drivers was also expensive, resulting in the impetus to purchase a tour bus.

One added benefit that a larger bus provides is a substantial increase in room for equipment storage. An on-board restroom is another welcome addition.

The “new” bus was purchased using TopCat Club funds as well as a contribution from the Charlie and Mae Driggers Endowment Fund.

Get on the bus! Wildcats travel in style to myriad of competitions.