

## Digest

**Men's, women's basketball teams finish with mixed results in 2006-07**

ACU basketball teams wrapped up their seasons in March with the women reaching the conference tournament but the men finishing with just 10 wins, nine of them in early season play.

The ACU women finished 17-12, although the 2006-07 season came to a disappointing end for head coach **Shawna Lavender's** team when it lost to Central Oklahoma in the first round of the Lone Star Conference Post-Season Tournament. The Wildcats finished 8-6 in the LSC South Division, but when forced to go on the road for the first-round game, couldn't keep up with the Lady Bronchos in their home arena.

The Wildcats did feature a breakout season from sophomore center **Audrey Maxwell**, who earned first team all-LSC South Division and second team NCAA all-region honors. Maxwell – who averaged 13.5 points and 10.1 rebounds per game – finished the season with 12 double-doubles, two 20-rebound games and six games with at least 15 rebounds.

ACU's other standout throughout the season was junior point guard **Alex Guiton**, who also was voted first team all-LSC South and second team NCAA all-region. Guiton averaged 15.8 points and 3.1 rebounds per game while leading ACU to post-season play for the third time in Lavender's four full seasons as head coach.

On the men's side, the Wildcats were 10-16 overall but finished with a 1-11 record in the LSC South, dropping their last nine conference games. Junior guard **Cortnie Ross** was the Wildcats' most consistent performer, averaging 11 points and 5.4 rebounds per contest.

**Artificial turf added to practice field**

Construction began in late May on the addition of FieldTurf to the football practice field on the ACU campus, giving the Wildcats a practice surface similar to what they play their home games on at Shotwell Stadium.

The \$300,000 project funded by donors was more than one year in the making and came on the heels of the Wildcats' 8-3 season that ended with their first NCAA playoff appearance.

"We've had a lot of very positive things happen in our program since the end of last season, but this is huge," said ACU head coach **Chris Thomsen ('00 M.Ed.)**. "This will give our guys a chance to work year-round, no matter what the weather conditions might be like. Even though it's not covered, we'll still be able to get in our work."

**Track teams add more championships to impressive list**

For the ACU track and field program, the 2007 season proved to be more of the same old, same old.

For some programs that would leave a lot to be desired. For the Wildcats, though, that meant two more Lone Star Conference titles, two national runner-up finishes and one NCAA Division II national championship.

The men's national outdoor title was ACU's 59th overall national team title (55 in track and field) and 52nd NCAA championship. ACU trails only UCLA (100), Stanford (93) and USC (84) in team national titles in NCAA history.

"We had a lot of challenges and obstacles to overcome during the year, but I was so proud of the way we responded to each of those," said head coach **Don D. Hood ('87)**.

The Wildcat who seemed to be at his best each week during both the indoor and outdoor seasons was distance ace **Nicodemus Naimadu**, who has one cross country season

and one indoor track and field season of eligibility remaining.

Naimadu won two individual national championships during the season (5000 meters indoors and 3,000-meter steeplechase outdoors) to set a new school record for individual national championships with 11, surpassing the great **Bobby Morrow ('58)** and **John Kemboi ('02)**, who each won 10.

Naimadu's victory in the steeplechase at the outdoor nationals (May 24-26 in Charlotte, N.C.) was his 10th straight in the event. It also was his final outdoor race as a collegian, giving him three national titles in the event to go with three at the Penn Relays, two at the Texas Relays, one in the Lone Star Conference in 2005, and one at the 2007 ACU Track Classic.

At the outdoor nationals, ACU became the first school to sweep the two multi-event championships at the meet when **Camille Vandendriessche** won the decathlon and **Jessica Withrow** captured the heptathlon.

Other champions at the outdoor nationals were **Julius Nyango** in the 800 meters and **Davy Manga** in the triple jump. On the women's side,

**Olha Kryv'yak** (steeplechase), **Shawna-Kaye Thompson** (400 hurdles) and the 4x400 relay team all finished second in their events. The 4x400 relay team broke the school record with its time of 3:33.66, while **Venessa Whittle** ran a 2:07.76 in the 800 meter prelims to break a 22-year-old school record (2:08.77).

The men captured their sixth straight outdoor national title with 105.50 points, easily coasting past second-place St. Augustine's, which finished with 73. **Lincoln (Mo.)** scored 82.5 points for its fifth straight women's title, while ACU was second with 69.

"I was proud of our girls," **Hood** said. "We set two school records and performed really well. We did a lot of good things. We're narrowing the gap."

At the indoor national meet in Boston in March, **Vladyslav Gorbenko** won the triple jump, and **Naimadu** won the 5000 meters.

At the LSC championship meet in May, the men won their 14th straight league title with 248 points, while the women won their second straight title with 280. ▲



*Angie Aguilar finished second in the 2007 NCAA Division II women's indoor pole vault in Boston, Mass., and later won her third consecutive Lone Star Conference outdoor championship.*

BRIAN SCHINDLER

## Wildcat student-athletes in spring sports post another dominating effort in 2007

When can you classify the greatest season, in terms of wins, a disappointment? When a school-record 47 wins isn't enough to earn an invitation to the NCAA playoffs?

That's exactly what happened to the ACU baseball team in 2007, however, when the Wildcats were almost inexplicably left out of the NCAA Division II South Central Region Tournament despite winning the Lone Star Conference South Division title, finishing as the runner-up in the LSC tournament and being ranked in the region's top four all season.

But the numbers didn't go the Wildcats' way, and their season ended short of a trip to the regional for only the second time since 2000.

"It was obviously disappointing that we didn't make the regional tournament as an at-large team," said ACU head coach Britt Bonneau, who won his 450th career game in 2007. "But we set a new school record for wins with 47, so we don't have anything to be embarrassed about."

The Wildcats had a few surprises during the season, chief among them the pitching of sophomore **Trey Watten**, who became the first pitcher in school history to win 10 games without a loss. Senior third baseman **Alec Sowards** – who committed just three errors on the season – was voted to the first national Gold Glove Team for his work in the field. And freshman shortstop **Willie Uechi** was voted first team all-Lone Star Conference South Division and the division's Freshman of the Year.

The biggest surprise, however, was junior pitcher **Jameson Maj**, who grabbed the closer's role early in the season and became one of the most dominant pitchers

Sometimes even the best-laid plans don't flourish the way they are intended. That phrase would probably best sum up the 2007 softball season that ended with the Wildcats at 25-24 and out of both the Lone Star Conference and NCAA post-season tournaments.

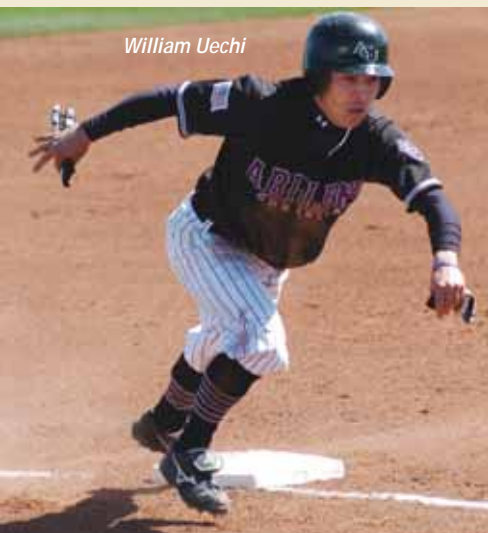
That's unusual for a program that in the two seasons prior to 2007 had won 73 games, one LSC South Division title and made back-to-back trips to the NCAA Division II South Central Region Tournament. But 2007 never quite came together for a team that was picked in the pre-season to win the LSC South Division title.

The offense never clicked for the Wildcats, who hit just .285 with 49 home runs with the majority of the same players who in 2006 had hit .332 with an LSC-record 61 home runs.

One of the bright spots for ACU was senior catcher **Samantha Borgeson**, who was named first team all-LSC South Division, LSC South Academic Player of the Year, first team academic all-Region VI and academic all-America, both by *ESPN The Magazine*. Borgeson hit .303 with 11 home runs and a team-high 32 RBI.

Another bright spot was the pitching performance of junior **Kim McDonald**, who originally transferred to play in the infield after an all-America career at Temple Junior College. But forced to pitch, McDonald finished the season 13-5 with a 3.52 ERA.

Another year, another solid tennis season for both the ACU men's and women's teams. Both won their respective NCAA Division II Central Region championships to advance to the national tournament. The ACU women



William Uechi



Kim McDonald



Hugues Joannes



Juan Nunez

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in the nation. He tied the national record for saves in a season with 20 on his way to earning first team all-America honors from Daktronics and the American Baseball Coaches' Association.

The good news for the Wildcats – but perhaps not so much for opponents – is that Maj returns in 2008, along with nine other starters as the Wildcats make another run toward the regional tournament and beyond.

It took 11 years for the golf team to return to the NCAA Division II national tournament, but if the 2007 season is any indication, it won't be nearly that long before the Wildcats make a return trip.

In the best season of his four-year tenure as ACU head coach, **Mike Campbell** ('91) directed the Wildcats to a second-place finish at the NCAA Division II South / South Central Super Regional, securing an at-large bid to the national tournament. ACU, which hadn't played at nationals since 1997, rebounded from an erratic first day to finish tied for eighth in the final team standings.

ACU, in fact, was the only team in the field to improve its score each day of the tournament, finishing at 66-over-par 1,202.

"Going into the tournament, I thought we had as good a chance as any team to win the national title," Campbell said. "I think we played pretty even with (national champion) Barry University after the first day. When you're in the middle of the tournament, you don't really think about anything other than winning. But when it was over and we were able to look back on our year, we were pleased with how we had played and performed."

ACU was led all season by freshman **Hugues Joannes**, who was ranked No. 8 nationally going into the tournament and was voted first team all-America, the first Wildcat to earn that honor since Trey Barnes in 1999.

finished 26-6 and ranked No. 13 in the nation in the final poll, while the men were 15-10 and ranked No. 20.

For the women, their trip to the national tournament was their 12th straight, but the loss to West Florida marked the 10th time in those 12 years that ACU had lost in the quarterfinals.

The trip to the national tournament also came after ACU was upset by Northeastern State, 5-3, in the championship match of the Lone Star Conference Tournament. But ACU rolled through the regional to earn an automatic bid to nationals.

Sophomore **Irene Squillaci** and junior **Aina Rafolo** led ACU all season, and that duo finished the season ranked No. 6 in Division II doubles, earning first team all-America honors. Squillaci was ranked No. 26 and Rafolo No. 36 overall in singles play.

The ACU men finally got over the Midwestern State hump, knocking off the Mustangs in the LSC Tournament championship and winning their fifth conference title in the last six years. The men won their first regional title since 2004 with a 5-1 decision over Cameron, earning a bid to the national tournament.

**Juan Nunez** finished the season ranked No. 48 in the nation in singles.

"I'm really proud of the way both of our teams played throughout the season," said ACU head coach **Hutton Jones** ('81). "Our men went into the season without a bullseye on their back for the first time in a long time, and they handled a different kind of challenge very well."

"Our women had very high expectations placed on them before the season started, and they stood up to that kind of pressure all year," Jones said. ▲

## Maj hooks NCAA Division II record-tying 20 saves on way to first team all-America honors

Ask ACU relief pitcher **Jameson Maj** if he would rather be standing on the mound with the ball in his hand in the ninth inning of a close game or on a lake somewhere fishing, and this is the answer you're likely to get:

"Ummm ... I don't know ... that's a tough decision," Maj said.

He finally offered up that it would depend on the season, saying the best scenario for him would be to close out the ninth inning on a Wildcat national championship and then hit a local fishing hole bright and early the next morning.

Opposing hitters would have preferred Maj to have been fishing most of 2007, when he posted one of the best seasons ever by an NCAA Division II relief pitcher. Maj recorded 20 saves, tying the national single-season record and setting new ACU and Lone Star Conference single-season and career records for saves.

His work on the mound helped ACU to a school single-season-record 47 wins while recording a 5-3 record, 72 strikeouts and a 1.00 ERA in 54 innings of work. Using a fastball that was consistently in the 88-90 mph range and good off-speed pitches, Maj allowed just four walks and gave up just six runs on his way to posting a season that earned him first team NCAA Division II all-America honors by both Daktronics and the American Baseball Coaches' Association.

"It was great to have Jameson in that role," said ACU head coach **Britt Bonneau**. "We had a ton of confidence in him, and his ability to take over the closer's role allowed us to do what we needed to in terms of letting **Trey Watten** (10-0 as a sophomore in 2007) get some work on the mound.

When Maj arrived in Abilene as a transfer from Vernon College, neither he nor Bonneau was sure of his role. He could either start as he did on occasion at Vernon, or he could move into the closer's spot, where he eventually found his niche.

Maj, though, will be the first to tell you that he didn't really embrace the closer's role until late March when ACU was in Edmond, Okla., for a four-game series against



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LSC rival Central Oklahoma. In the second game of the first day's doubleheader (March 23), ACU took a 9-7 lead into the bottom of the seventh when Bonneau gave the ball to Maj. He had six saves to his credit at the time.

Central, though, roughed him up for three runs (all earned) on five hits in one inning, and Maj was credited with the loss in a 10-9 Broncho victory. But like any good closer, Maj quickly forgot about the bad outing, and the next day he pitched three combined innings of two-hit baseball to pick up a pair of saves as ACU salvaged a split of the four-game set.

Those two games March 24 began a season-ending streak that saw Maj appear in 22 games (34-2/3 innings), allowing just 16 hits and two runs (both earned) while striking out 52 batters and, amazingly, walking just one batter.

"My personality is such that I'm not going to dwell for very long on the bad things," Maj said. "I certainly remembered that loss, and I was excited to pitch the next day to try and erase that bad feeling about losing that game for the guys."

That was the only time all season that Maj let his Wildcat teammates down in the clutch. "He worked fast and he pounded the zone with strikes," Bonneau said. "His consistency and his approach are what made him so successful."

Maj – who plans to pitch for the Denton Outlaws of the Texas Collegiate League this summer – said he was not thinking too much about the Major League Baseball Amateur Draft (June 7-8).

"The thought (of being drafted) has entered my mind, but it did last year, too, and nothing happened," he said. "I'm not going to take less than what I'm getting in scholarship money here to go and play minor league ball next year. I'll just have to wait and see."

In the meantime, Bonneau will plan on another season of turning the late innings of close games over to Maj, who is only 12 saves short of becoming the all-time leader in NCAA Division II (Jimmy Hoog of Eckerd owns the record with 31 from 1986-89).

If, that is, he can get the fishing rod out of one hand and a glove on the other. ▲

## Wildcats lead way as LSC honors all-time top performers

ACU had 33 current and former student-athletes and coaches named to the 75-person all-sports team, a squad that continues the Lone Star Conference's year-long celebration of its 75th year.

The listing includes 32 men's and 23 women's student-athletes, along with 20 baseball, cross country, golf, soccer, softball, tennis, track and field and volleyball coaches.

The conference recognized the top 75 football and top 75 basketball players in LSC history earlier in the year. ACU was well-represented on them as well, with nine Wildcats on the football team and a conference-high 11 on the basketball list.

ACU led the all-sport listing with a total of 33 current and former Wildcats, including a number of

track and field honorees. Texas A&M-Kingsville (formerly Texas A&I) and West Texas A&M each added seven honorees.

Seven coaches on the list, including four from ACU, led their respective teams to one or more national championships.

ACU coaches selected for the all-sports team were Don W. Hood ('55), Wes Kittley ('81) and Jon Murray from the track and field and cross country teams, Britt Bonneau from baseball, Vince Jarrett from golf, Hutton Jones ('81) from men's and women's tennis, Chantiel (McDonnell '98) Wilson from softball and former volleyball head coach Brek Horn.

Wildcat student-athletes were headlined by the track and field trio of Billy Olson ('81), Yolande (Straughn '92) Vickers and junior Nicodemus Naimadu.

Olson was a U.S. Olympian in 1988 and his career best of 19-5.5 still ranks him among the top 10 U.S. pole vaulters of all time.

Straughn won a total of 17 conference and national championships in individual events and relays. She also competed in the 1988 Olympics for her native Barbados.

Naimadu – the only current student-athlete to make the top 75 team – is one of the greatest distance runners in NCAA history. He is the only male athlete in Division II history to win three

cross country national titles.

Other ACU selections to the team were hurdler Brian Amos ('94), sprinter Tracey Barnes ('98), pole vaulter Tim Bright ('83), softball firstbaseman Katie Bryan ('05), shortstop Matt Davidson ('01), sprinter Sylvia Dyer ('91), sprinter Delloreen Ennis-London ('99), discus star Cliff Felkins ('88), high jumper Yolanda Henry ('89), pole vaulter Dale Jenkins ('86), long distance runner John Kemboi ('02), tennis player Michelle King ('91), shotputter Marlene Lewis ('89), pole vaulter Jane (McNeill '02) Clayton, pitcher Shelly Owen ('98), pole vaulter Brad Pursley ('85), PGA golfer Jeev Singh ('96), tennis player Donna Sykes ('89), high jumper Mazel Thomas ('90), middle distance runner and former track and field head coach Freddie Williams ('87), and sprinter Mark Witherspoon ('85). ▲



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*Brad Massey (right) led the Wildcats of head coach Britt Bonneau (left) to the 2003 College Baseball World Series. Massey was a three-time first team all-LSC South Division selection.*