Baseball comes up with best season since ’91

By posting a 25-8 season, the UW-Stout baseball team put together their best season in more than five years as they tied for the Wisconsin State University Conference (WSUC) Northern Division title and advanced into the WSUC playoffs.

The softball Blue Devils didn’t fare quite as well, going 19-23, but still went 5-3 in league play to tie for second in the Wisconsin Women’s Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) West Division.

There were no national titles this year, but the men’s track and field team advanced 10 performers to the NCAA Division III Track and Field Championships in La Crosse – the most ever – and the women’s team sent three to nationals.

Baseball

A strong pitching staff led by second-team all-region pick Ron Yessa (Sr., Janesville), consistent hitting, fire on the basepaths and few errors helped the baseball team to their best record since 1991.

As a team, Stout hit .346 with second baseman Barry Michlig (Sr., Wausau) leading the way with a scorching .427 batting average. Yessa led the pitching staff with a 6-3 record and recorded 75 strikeouts in 69 innings pitched.

The Blue Devils shattered a team record in stolen bases, nabbing 80 in 93 attempts, with Andy Koehler (Jr., Stillwater, Minn.) leading the way with 18.

Stout put together a 12-game winning streak early in the season, getting off to their best start ever and ranked as high as 25th in the nation.

Minn. nabbing 80 in 93 attempts, with a .403 batting average and was named to the all-region first team, both on the mound and at the plate. Bare appeared in 30 games, finishing with an 11-14 record. At bat, Bare led the team with a .403 batting average and was named to the all-region first team as a utility player.

Amy Jamieson (Jr., Dayton, Minn.) was a second team all-region player and, coming off a basketball knee injury, performed admirably for the Blue Devils in centerfield and at shortstop in her first year of collegiate softball. Jamieson became the first student athlete in Stout history to be named to three all-conference teams in one school year. In addition to softball, Jamieson was all-conference in tennis and basketball.

Joining Bare and Jamieson on the all-conference team were Cara Fenhouse (Fr., Superior) and Tanya Petrie (So., Menomonie). Tricia Ahlers (Jr., Sheldon) was honorable mention.

Men’s track and field

A hamstring injury to six-time national champion Terry Anders (Sr., Cornell) at the national meet cast a cloud of gloom over the Blue Devils for the weekend. The injury kept Anders out of competition and wiped out a previously optimistic outlook for a top four finish.

But Stout nearly pulled off a top four finish. Jason Lehman (Jr., Bruce) was third in the discus, Paul Gilles (Jr., Plumb City) was second in the steeplechase in school record time, Mike Hallingstad (Sr., Sparta) was fifth in the 400 and the 4 X 100 relay team was fifth. Stout had a chance to tie for fourth in the 4 X 400 relay – the final event of the meet – but a dropped baton eliminated the opportunity and Stout finished 11th.

While the national meet didn’t meet expectations, the season did. Stout was third at the WSUC Championships, and the 4 X 200-relay team of Anders, Hallingstad, John Boldt (Jr., Hartland) and Jesse Witcraft (Sr., New Lisbon) set a college division record in winning the prestigious Drake Relays.

Lehman won both the shot put and discus at the conference meet, while Anders won the 200 and 400. The 4 X 100-relay also was first.

Women’s track and field

Katy Olsen (So., Rice Lake), Katie Jacobson (So., Eau Claire) and Amber Olinger (Fr., Fairmont, Minn.) led a youthful Blue Devil charge, with all three advancing to the national meet.

Olsen was the only to qualify to the finals, and finished ninth in the 5000 meter.

Jacobson twice broke the school record in the 800 meter, and Olinger was the conference runner-up in the high jump. Jacobson was second at conference in the 1500 and Olsen was second in the 3000 and 5000.

As a team, the Blue Devils moved up two spots to sixth place, and were five points out of fourth.

Athletic conferences merge, form WIAC

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The new name, constitution and bylaws went into effect on July 1 and serve the same nine UW System institutions.