Fall sports wrap-up

Overall, a successful Blue Devil sports season

So much for playing for the future. The 1997 UW-Stout sports season was played for the present and, overall, it was a successful season with all six of the teams showing improvement.

The Blue Devil football team generated more excitement than in quite some years when they finished with a 6-4 overall record and a 5-2 conference record that tied them for second place. Along the way, Stout defeated UW-La Crosse, UW-River Falls and UW-Stevens Point on their way to their best conference finish since 1965.

The Blue Devil soccer team posted a 9-9-overall record and 3-5 in league play, their best finishes in three years as a varsity program. The volleyball squad turned their season around from a year ago, finishing at 17-14. The women’s tennis team placed fourth at the conference tournament and had their first ever No. 1 doubles champion.

Two women cross country runners earned All-America honors — the first time in more than a decade that has happened — and the Blue Devil men had an all-conference performer.

And the future looks equally as good for all of the fall sports with very few performers lost to graduation.

Football

Keyed by record-setting performances by quarterback Matt Bunyan (Jr., Janesville), the Blue Devil football team came up with a season that fifth year coach Ed Meezekat has been dreaming about.

Bunyan passed for a single season school record 3221 yards and 33 touchdowns, breaking Tim Peterson’s 1989 marks of 2956 passing yards and 20 passing touchdowns. Bunyan also led the nation in total yards with 3216.

With wins over La Crosse, River Falls and Stevens Point, the Blue Devils even entertained thoughts of challenging for the conference title. With all record-setting performances by Bunyan, offensive lineman Jim Pillars (Sr., Menomonie) and defensive linemen Paul Gilles (Sr., Janesville) easily set a single season record for points after touchdowns, making 37-of-41 attempts. He is also tied for the career record with 57.

To catch those passes the Blue Devils had a strong contingent of receivers in Scott Wojcik (Jr., Marshfield), Jesse Wierstra (Jr., New Lisbon) and Jim Pillars (Sr., Chicago, Ill.) Wojcik and Pillars each caught nine touchdown passes, matching the mark set by Mark Rothe in 1987. Wierstra, a cracks All-American, caught eight TD passes, including three against River Falls.

The Blue Devils were well represented on the all-conference team. Wojcik, offensive lineman Jason Lehman (Sr., Bruce), defensive linemen Andy Wikstrom (Sr., Menomonie) and Mike Olson (Sr., Farmington, Minn.) were first team picks, while Bunyan, defensive lineman Jason Neshitt (Sr., Burlington), linebackers Sam Stuard (Sr., Indianapolis, Ind.) and Don Hagenhart (Sr., Dousman) and cornerback Joe Verstegen (Jr., Little Chute) were second team picks. Honorable mention went to safety Corey Morning (Jr., Bloomer) and offensive lineman Ben Leslie (Sr., Eau Claire).

Soccer

Not to be outdone in record breaking performances, the Blue Devil women’s soccer team rewrote a good portion of their record book this fall.

Alyssa Halverson (Jr., Rochester, Minn.) a transfer from St. Cloud State where she was the Huskie’s starting goalkeeper, shed the goalkeepers cloak and became an opponent’s goalie’s enemy. By the time the middle of the season came around, Halverson had already broken the single season goals scored record and went on to rack up 14 goals scored, five assists and 33 points, all single season and career records. For her efforts, Halverson was named first team all-conference.

The Blue Devils finished the season at 500, the first time ever in their short three-year existence.

Tennis

Amy Jamieson (Sr., Dayton, Minn.) and Lauren Mader (So., Neenah) combined to win the WIAC No. 1 doubles crown, the first time any Blue Devil team has accomplished the feat.

Jamieson finished as the conference runner-up at No. 1 singles and Mader was runner-up at No. 2 singles.

The Blue Devils finished in fourth place in the conference, but finished with a 4-2 conference dual record.

Short of players — only seven on the roster — the Blue Devils improved their dual record to 7-5, one of the best dual records in Blue Devil women’s tennis history.

Volleyball

Behind the hitting of All-Region performer Stacy Stoddard (Jr., St. Paul, Minn.), the Blue Devil volleyball team made some noise and picked up quite a few more wins along the way.

Stoddard finished with a school record 444 kills, to go along with her ever-increasing school record for career blocks that she established last season.

Tori Feit (So., Rushmore, Minn.) established a single match record when she hit .818 in a match with UW-Oshkosh. Only two weeks earlier, Stoddard had set a single match mark of .800.

Setter Jenny Krajewski (So., Blaine, Minn.) matched a single match record in assists when she provided 63.

Joining Stoddard on the all-conference team was Monica Cyrus (Jr., Farmington, Minn.) who provided steady play at the net and back on defense, leading the team in digs.

Women’s Cross Country

All season long, roommates Katy Olsen (Jr., Rice Lake) and Katie Jacobson (Jr., Eau Claire) pushed each other. Most of the season, it was Olsen that came out on top of the friendly rivalry. But at the NCAA Division III Championships, in weather more fitting for a duck in an insulated rain coat, Jacobson thrived in the conditions and finished sixth, while Olsen finished a nearby 11th.

Both earned All-American awards.

Despite finishing third at the conference meet and sixth at the NCAA Midwest Regional meet as a team, the Blue Devils did not advance to the national meet. But Olsen and Jacobson were not alone. Several members of the squad loaded up the car, drove to the national meet in Boston, Mass., cheered their teammates on and drove back.

During the conference meet, Olsen placed fourth. Jacobson was fifth, and the team moved up to a third place finish.

Men’s Cross Country

Paul Gilles (Sr., Plum City) and Jason Petersohn (Sr., Mantowoc) were the steady, driving forces behind the Blue Devil men’s cross country team. Gilles earned all-conference honors by placing 15th, as the Blue Devils finished sixth as a team.

Blue Devils host annual alumni game

For former UW-Stout point guard Zak Alwin, it was just like old times as he scored 21 points to lead his team to a 76-48 win in the Blue Devils’ annual alumni game.

Alwin, a former all-conference pick who now lives in Stevens Point, canned three 3-pointers, connected on four more shots from the floor and added four free throws.

Chuck Scharff Jr., added 17 points for Alwin’s team. Greg Fisher scored six points and Ted Huppert scored 10. For the Blue team, Gary Lacker scored 10 points and Greg Koczuk chipped in five. Chad Greenquist also played in the contest. The teams were coached by former team managers Pat Grady and Mike McAndrews.

For more information on the individual teams, see the UW-Stout Athletics Web site at http://www.uwstout.edu/athletics
Five enter Athletic Hall of Fame

Two vital cogs in the evolution of the UW-Stout women's cross country program, a baseball player who overcame illness to earn his way to the top of the school record books, a rugged rebounder on Stout's last men's basketball championship team and a three-time All-America wrestler were inducted into the UW-Stout Athletic Hall of Fame Nov. 8, 1997. Cross country coach Lou Klitzke, cross country and track and field standout Sheila Geere, baseball player Jeff Kloes, basketball player Steve Zmyewsky and wrestler Tom Ott are members of the 1997 induction class.

Sheila Geere  Sheila Geere and UW-Stout athletics almost parted ways after her freshman year. The loss that would have been for both the school's cross country and track and field programs.

Geere went on to win two indoor conference track titles in 1986, the 5000-meter run in 17:30 and the 3000-meter run in 10:12. During that same year, she earned four NAIA All-American awards, placing second in the indoor championships two-mile in a time of 10:47 and fourth in the 3000-meter, in a time of 10:04. She placed sixth at the 1986 NAIA outdoor championships in the 5000-meter and eighth in the 3000-meter.

“I didn’t think I was good enough to run in college,” Geere said, so she quit the program. Geere said cross country head coach and track and field distance coach Lou Klitzke, who was also inducted into the Hall of Fame this year, encouraged her to return to the team.

“Lou encouraged me and was a big influence in my life,” Geere said. “He would write little letters and called. I figured I would let him quit bugging me and go out.” The rest, as they say, was history.

As a freshman, Geere was voted the cross country team’s most spirited. By her junior year, she was named most improved and was a member of the NAIA District 14 team. As a senior, she was named co-captain, and was a member of the NAIA District 14 team’s most spirited. By her junior year, she was named most improved and was a member of the NAIA District 14 team. As a senior, she was named co-captain, and was a member of the NAIA District 14 team’s most spirited.

Jeff Kloes  More than 10 years after he hung up the glove for the UW-Stout baseball team, Jeff Kloes still holds several Stout baseball records including the single season records for at-bats (165), hits (81), doubles (16) and batting average (.396). He also owns the career records for at-bats (513) and hits (204) and is third in career batting average (.396).

A four-year starter for the Blue Devils, Kloes, a native of Appleton, Wisc., put his career on hold before the start of his junior year to battle Hodgkin’s disease, then returned to the Blue Devils.

As a catcher, he helped the team to two conference championships, was a three-time All-conference pick, a two-time NAIA District 14 player of the year and Area 4 player of the year as a senior.

Kloes, who lives in Eau Claire and is employed as the vice president of sales of JBI Inc. in Osseo, has played with the Eau Claire Cavaliers, a semi-pro league, and has been named most valuable player four times. He is still active in baseball, playing part time with an amateur team in Hayward.

Thomas Ott  Versatility defines Thomas Ott, who played football and baseball for the Blue Devils, but excelled at wrestling. Ott was the conference champion at 152 pounds on the 1986 WSCC championship team, and went on to place fourth at the NAIA championships later on in the season. With a 16-4-2 record, Ott was named the team’s most valuable player.

In his four-year career, Ott posted a 59-28-5 career record and was a two-time co-captain and three-time All-American, advancing to national action during his freshman, junior and senior years. As a freshman, Ott finished seventh at the NAIA championships, and as a senior, he placed fifth.

During his Stout career, Ott tallied 10 varsity letters, was chosen baseball most valuable player in 1967 at third base and shortstop, and was a place kicker for the football team.

While at Stout, Ott was involved in the Chi Lambda fraternity and was a four year member of the S-Club, serving as both historian and secretary. Ott graduated from Stout in 1968 as a member of the first business administration class.

Ott returned to Pennsylvania where he has been very active in coaching youth baseball in Montourville, Pa. He coached the Montourville American Legion Post 104 team in three championships in 1988, 1989 and 1990, and the regional championship in 1990.

Wrestling continued to occupy time on Ott’s schedule. He has been a wrestling official for 23 years and seven times refereed the state championship finals match. Ott was inducted into the Muncy High School Hall of Fame in 1994.

Currently the manager of Baxter Plumbing and Heating in Hughesville, Pa., Ott has worked as a sales manager for Muncy Homes Inc., was the principal of Faith Tabernacle Christian Academy, and was a sales manager for ConChem Co.

Ott and his wife, Sharon, have three adult children, Thomas, Jamie and Melissa.

Steve Zmyewsky  A rugged rebounder and very capable scorer, Steve Zmyewsky is currently ranked ninth on the Blue Devil career rebounding list (659), 25th on the all-time scoring list (1537) and 28th on the all-time rebounding list (659) and was a member of the last UW-Stout men’s basketball team to earn a conference title.

Zmyewsky recalls the year fondly, noting it as one of his biggest thrills in sports, especially defeating UW-Eau Claire at home by one point in the final game of the season to earn a share of the title with UW-Platteville.

During that 1974-75 championship season, Zmyewsky was second on the team in scoring with 374 points and pulled down a team-high 280 rebounds.

During his tenure at Stout, Zmyewsky was named all-conference, team captain and academic all-conference. He placed in the conference top ten in field goal percentage, free throw percentage and rebounding. Zmyewsky, who red-shirted after the championship season, called his time at Stout “five of the best years of my life.”

“Blue Devil basketball provided me with excitement to last a lifetime,” Zmyewsky said. “My work ethic was so enhanced, I will be influenced forever. The people I met would remain in my heart for a lifetime. The education I was to receive would open new doors and give my life direction.”

Zmyewsky, originally from the East Coast of the United States, has remained close to the Menomonie area. He first taught industrial arts in La Crosse, then took a sales position with an insurance company in southeastern Minnesota. During that time, he coached at Houston (Minn) High School, posting a 34-6 record during his only two years and, in 1984, led the team to the school’s first district championship in 57 years.

But by the bug to again work with high school age youth, Zmyewsky picked up a master’s degree in guidance and counseling, working first as a counselor at Waseca (Minn) Middle School, then at Mabel-Canton and Fillmore high schools, where he is presently.

In 1990, Zmyewsky was named the Southeast Minnesota Counselor of the Year and the Minnesota Counselor of the Year. Zmyewsky is a licensed thoroughbred trainer and owned the 1992 Claiming Horse of the Year at Canterbury Downs in 1992.

Zmyewsky currently resides in Houston, Minn., with his wife, Jill, a Stout graduate, and two teenage children, Kristina and Justin.

Bostrom receives service award

Around the Menomonie area sports scene, he is simply referred to as Jake.

More than 20 years as the radio voice of the UW-Stout Blue Devils and nearly 30 years within the Stout and Menomonie communities, Jake Bostrom was the recipient of the UW-Stout Distinguished Service Athletic Award during the annual UW-Stout Hall of Fame Banquet.

Bostrom, who has done both play-by-play and color for both Stout and area high schools, came to Menomonie in 1968 as a member of the university’s Student Services department, where he was assigned to advise the student newspaper, The Stoutonian, during the turbulent ‘60s.

Bostrom left the university in late 1971 to join Lutheran Brotherhood as a sales representative, which he is still affiliated with today.

Over the years, Bostrom has been associated with various Stout booster clubs, serving in nearly every office the organization had, and was a prime force behind the local Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) organization.

The FCA was what actually got Bostrom involved in local radio when he started a pre-game feature featuring FCA athletes for what was then WMNE (now WMEQ radio). A few years later, he was at a Menomonie High School game in Eau Claire, and WMEQ owner/announcer Mike Phillips tapped Bostrom to help him with that game.

The microphone has been his ever since.

“Receiving this award is a real thrill, a real kick,” Bostrom said. “Some of the guys that have received this award have really served. You can’t put a price tag on it.”

Bostrom, and his wife of 34 years, Shirley, have two adult children, Kristen and Kari, and one grandson, Luther.