

THE PENDULUM

ELON, NORTH CAROLINA • FRIDAY, AUGUST 29, 2014 • VOLUME 40 EDITION 17

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COLONIAL EXPEDITION

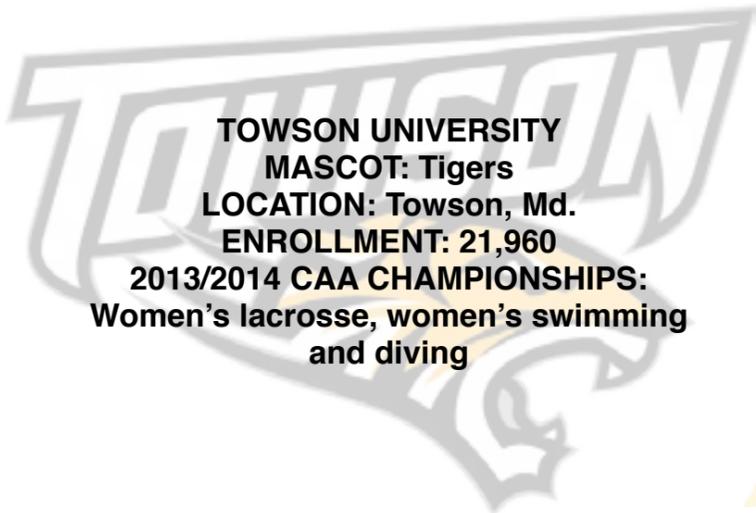
ELON FACES NEW CHALLENGES IN CAA



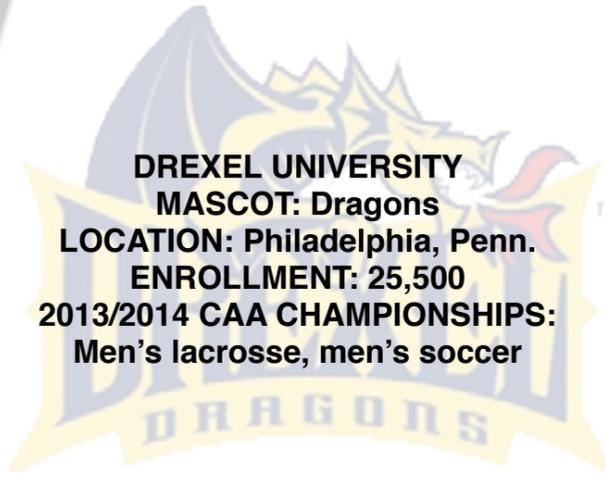
FALL SPORTS PREVIEW

MEN'S SOCCER WOMEN'S SOCCER VOLLEYBALL
FOOTBALL CROSS COUNTRY

MEET THE CAA



TOWSON UNIVERSITY
MASCOT: Tigers
LOCATION: Towson, Md.
ENROLLMENT: 21,960
2013/2014 CAA CHAMPIONSHIPS:
 Women's lacrosse, women's swimming
 and diving



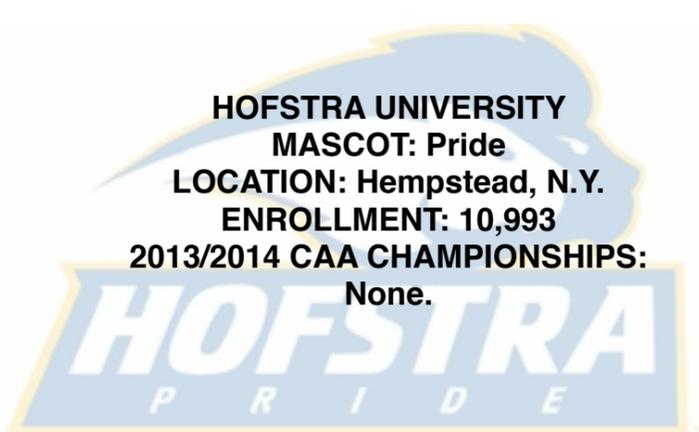
DREXEL UNIVERSITY
MASCOT: Dragons
LOCATION: Philadelphia, Penn.
ENROLLMENT: 25,500
2013/2014 CAA CHAMPIONSHIPS:
 Men's lacrosse, men's soccer



COLLEGE OF WILLIAM & MARY
MASCOT: Tribe
LOCATION: Williamsburg, Va.
ENROLLMENT: 8,258
2013/2014 CAA
CHAMPIONSHIPS: Men's cross
 country, women's cross country



NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
MASCOT: Huskies
LOCATION: Boston, Mass.
ENROLLMENT: 21,257
2013/2014 CAA
CHAMPIONSHIPS: Women's
 rowing, women's soccer



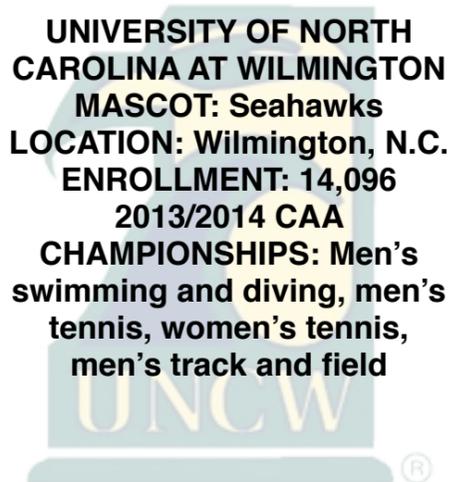
HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY
MASCOT: Pride
LOCATION: Hempstead, N.Y.
ENROLLMENT: 10,993
2013/2014 CAA CHAMPIONSHIPS:
 None.



JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY
MASCOT: Dukes
LOCATION: Harrisonburg, Va.
ENROLLMENT: 18,107
2013/2014 CAA
CHAMPIONSHIPS: Women's
 basketball, softball



COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON
MASCOT: Cougars
LOCATION: Charleston, S.C.
ENROLLMENT: 10,506
2013/2014 CAA
CHAMPIONSHIPS: Baseball,
 men's golf, women's golf,
 volleyball



**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH
 CAROLINA AT WILMINGTON**
MASCOT: Seahawks
LOCATION: Wilmington, N.C.
ENROLLMENT: 14,096
2013/2014 CAA
CHAMPIONSHIPS: Men's
 swimming and diving, men's
 tennis, women's tennis,
 men's track and field



**UNIVERSITY OF
 DELAWARE**
MASCOT: Blue Hens
LOCATION: Newark, Del.
ENROLLMENT: 21,856
2013/2014 CAA
CHAMPIONSHIPS: Men's
 basketball, field hockey,
 women's track and field

THE PENDULUM

Established 1974

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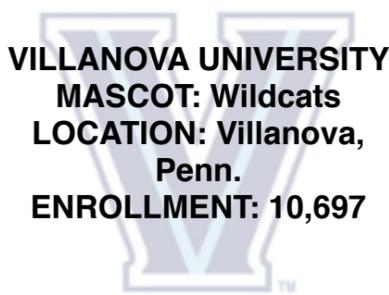
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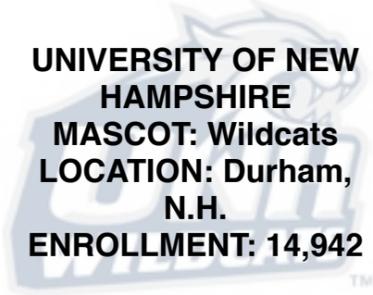
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Football-only competitors



VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY
MASCOT: Wildcats
LOCATION: Villanova,
 Penn.
ENROLLMENT: 10,697

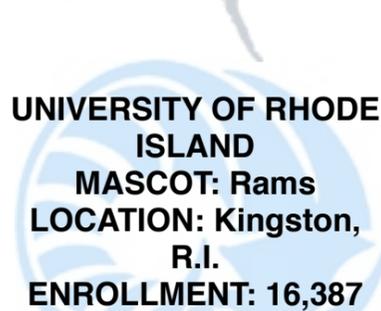


**UNIVERSITY OF NEW
 HAMPSHIRE**
MASCOT: Wildcats
LOCATION: Durham,
 N.H.
ENROLLMENT: 14,942



**UNIVERSITY OF
 RICHMOND**
MASCOT: Spiders
LOCATION: Richmond,
 Va.
ENROLLMENT: 4,140

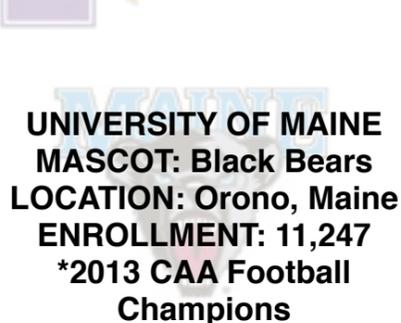
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
MASCOT: Great Danes
LOCATION: Albany, N.Y.
ENROLLMENT: 17,316



**UNIVERSITY OF RHODE
 ISLAND**
MASCOT: Rams
LOCATION: Kingston,
 R.I.
ENROLLMENT: 16,387



**STONY BROOK
 UNIVERSITY**
MASCOT: Seawolves
LOCATION: Stony Brook,
 N.Y.
ENROLLMENT: 24,259



UNIVERSITY OF MAINE
MASCOT: Black Bears
LOCATION: Orono, Maine
ENROLLMENT: 11,247
***2013 CAA Football
 Champions**

Skrosky, Little return to Elon with CAA looming

Tommy Hamzik
Sports Editor

They hail from different countries, different backgrounds and different sports. Each coach began his tenure at Elon University under a friend, a partner in coaching and saw unprecedented levels of success. Then, they took their careers elsewhere for fresh starts and new challenges.

This year, both Rich Skrosky and Chris Little return to help lead Elon into its newest era and its biggest stage.

Skrosky takes over the football program, and Little takes the helm of the men's soccer team as Elon makes the transition to the Colonial Athletic Association.

The move comes after 11 years in the Southern Conference and just 15 years after Elon became a full-time Division I institution. Elon leaves a league where it competed against the likes of Furman University and Davidson College to one where it will head north to play schools like Towson University and the University of Delaware.

Skrosky, who coached at Elon under Pete Lembo from 2006 to 2010, said it's bittersweet.

"I really enjoyed coaching in the Southern Conference back in the day," Skrosky said. "But with the movement that the Southern Conference had with [Appalachian State University] and Georgia Southern [University], I think the administration was like, 'This conference is starting to get a little uneasy. If you look at our footprint of our student body and alumni, it's going to be awesome.'"

Smooth transition

Little left Elon less than a year prior to receiving a call from head coach Darren Powell, who told him he had accepted a coaching position with the Orlando City Soccer Club of Major League Soccer.

Little was an assistant under Powell from 2010 to 2012 before becoming the Academy Director for the NC Fusion and head coach of the Carolina Dynamo, which competes in the Professional Development League.

After he helped build the success Elon men's soccer has seen — three straight SoCon Tournament titles and NCAA Tournament berths — Little immediately

knew he wanted to be back. But there was more to it than the on-field accolades.

"The biggest thing that stuck out to me then, and still sticks out to me now, is the family kind of atmosphere at Elon," Little said. "The closeness of the players, of the staff, of the academic support staff, the weight staff, the training staff, everybody. It's a very, very close-knit environment. I think that's what makes Elon very unique."

Little still keeps in touch with Powell but is starting to make his own mark on the program.

"Chris certainly brings a level of intensity and expectation that will keep us at that winning level," said Elon senior forward Jason Waterman. "That's something we expected coming in and has really held true so far."

Of all the teams at Elon, men's soccer is right up there with men's basketball in terms of student turnout at games. More than 3,000 people packed Rudd Field last November when Clemson University came to town for the NCAA Tournament.

Little said he is excited about that and the experience his players and staff get at Elon in general.

"That's part of the Elon experience — small class sizes, the teachers are going to know who you are, the regular interaction," Little said. "I think those principles and those values are embodied in our soccer program as well."

When Little was at Elon under Powell, his role was slightly closer to the players than a head coaching job, which allowed him to get to know the players, many of whom are on the roster now, at a personal level. It's helped with the transition thus far.

"We understand he cares about us as people when he's coaching us," Waterman said. "We know he's going to be hard on us. He makes us want to work for him. That's huge for a head coach and a team to succeed."

Changing a culture

Skrosky left Elon in 2010, one year after he was on a staff that led the Phoenix to its first Football Championship Series playoff appearance. Lembo took the head job at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, and Skrosky followed to become the offensive coordinator there.

When the Elon job opened up in November 2013 after three-year head coach



Elon went to the FCS playoffs in 2009 for the first time with Skrosky as offensive coordinator.

JANE SEIDEL | Photo Editor

Jason Swepson was fired, it wasn't a difficult decision for Skrosky to come back. After all, watching Elon struggle to a 10-24 record was tough for him.

"It was personal for me," Skrosky said.

With the low points of the last few seasons on everyone's minds, Skrosky is determined to make the players believe in the tradition of Elon football. He's brought in a number of speakers to talk to the team about the history of the program and the surrounding community.

"The biggest thing for [the players] to realize is they're part of something bigger than themselves, bigger than this team," Skrosky said. "There's a lot of great football tradition at Elon, going way back. I want them to know how important that is."

When Skrosky first came to Elon prior to the 2006 season, he didn't know much about the school. He had heard of it, but that was about it.

During his five years at Elon on Lembo's staff, he grew increasingly impressed with the community feeling which made everyone feel "connected." That was a major reason he came back.

So far, he's made an impact.

"He's passionate," said Kierre Brown, a fifth-year senior and wide receiver for Elon. "The few years in the past, we've lacked a passion for football. Either the players, the coaches, the support staff — whoever's dealing with the program. We lacked that passion as a whole."

"With Coach Skrosky coming in, he's just all about football. You see it on him in the way he carries himself. He doesn't say it, but football is everything for him. It carries over to the players, coaches and everyone around him."

As for the CAA, Skrosky loves the depth. There's been a CAA team in the national championship in seven of the last 11 years, and it's not just one team that made those appearances. It's five different ones.

"If it's not the best FCS conference in the country, it's definitely amongst the best," Skrosky said. "I think that would be a consensus. It's a great opportunity for

our institution to be able to play a [University of] Richmond and a Villanova [University] and a Delaware."

A special place

When Little has some free time, which isn't very often, he spends it with his 7-year-old daughter and 4-year-old son.

He'll also wander over to watch Skrosky direct Elon football practice. Little, a native of Swindon, England, said he learns from coaches of other sports on a daily basis.

"That's one of the wonderful things about working in an athletic department at a university," Little said. "There are people from different sports, different backgrounds. It's really interesting to see how they approach things and what their style is, ask questions and observe what other people do. We all ask each other questions of how we can get the most out of what we got."

That's something that Skrosky sees as being special about Elon, and how he hopes to bolster attendance at home football games.

"I try to make myself as visible as I can on campus, but I think it's the players," Skrosky said. "If you know Kierre Brown, you're going say, 'Yeah, I'm going to go see Kierre play.' You can do that at an Elon. At an Ohio State, they're going to get their 100,000. But they don't know the players. They know them because of ESPN, they know them from the dining hall, but they don't know them from the dorm. That's what makes an Elon, and this level even, pretty neat."

Skrosky and Little both have different tasks ahead of them — football has struggled, while men's soccer has been at the peak of the program's history. But the CAA is on both of their minds, bringing with it new opponents, more travel and a tougher road to success.

It's only been several months since they joined the staff at Elon, but it's clear Skrosky and Little are fit to embrace the challenge — and the grind.



In 2011, Elon reached the NCAA Tournament for the first time with Little as an assistant to Darren Powell.

JANE SEIDEL | Photo Editor

Elon men's soccer schedule

Elon 1, South Carolina 0 #

NC State 1, Elon 0 #

vs. Stetson^
Aug. 29- 5 p.m.

vs. Loyola Marymount^
Aug. 31 - 12 p.m.

vs. Winthrop \$
Sept. 5 - 5 p.m.

vs. Ohio State \$
Sept. 7 - 1 p.m.

vs. Florida International
Sept. 10 - 7 p.m.

vs. West Virginia
Sept. 14 - 7 p.m.

at Radford
Sept. 20- 6 p.m.

at Coastal Carolina
Sept. 26 - 7 p.m.

vs. High Point
Sept. 30 - 7 p.m.

vs. Hofstra*
Oct. 4 - 7 p.m.

at William & Mary*
Oct. 8 - 7 p.m.

vs. Northeastern*
Oct. 11 - 7 p.m.

at UNC Wilmington*
Oct. 15 - 7 p.m.

vs. Drexel*
Oct. 18 - 7 p.m.

vs. Duke
Oct. 21 - 7 p.m.

vs. James Madison*
Oct. 26 - 1 p.m.

at College of Charleston*
Oct. 29 - 7 p.m.

at Delaware*
Nov. 2 - 1 p.m.

CAA Championships*
Nov. 8, Location TBD

CAA Championships*
Nov. 13-16, Location TBD

denotes exhibition

^ denotes John Rennie/Nike Classic in Durham

\$ denotes UNC Wilmington Classic in Wilmington

* denotes CAA game

Phoenix looks to move past, but not forget, last year's historic run



Jason Waterman, pictured, and James Brace, Elon's leading goal scorers from 2013, were both named to the All-CAA Preseason Team.

FILE PHOTO BY STEFAN FORTMANN

Kyle Maher
Senior Reporter

It was an unprecedented season no one on last year's Elon University men's soccer team will forget.

The Phoenix went 13-4-1 in the regular season, including a 2-1 victory against sixth-ranked Coastal Carolina University and a comeback win over local rival University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Elon then swept through the Southern Conference tournament, beating Wofford College 1-0 in the championship game on then-junior forward Jason Waterman's goal in overtime. The win gave the Phoenix its third straight conference title and third straight NCAA Tournament berth.

The season took an even more remarkable turn after the first-round NCAA Tournament game against Clemson University.

In front of more than 3,000 maroon-and-gold-clad fans packed along the fence and bleachers, the teams tied at 1-1 in regulation and two hard-fought overtime periods, which sent the game into penalty kicks.

In that shootout, two Clemson players missed their penalty kicks, and Waterman had the chance to do what no other Phoenix player had ever done before — kick his team to its first NCAA tournament victory.

He coolly stepped up to the penalty spot and slotted the ball past the Tigers' goalkeeper and into the lower left side of the goal, playing the role of hero for the second time in as many weeks. He ran to the other end of the field, ripping off his jersey and twirling it like a pinwheel as hundreds of fans spilled onto the field to celebrate with him and his teammates.

Although the Phoenix would lose 4-0 to the tournament's No. 1 overall seed, the University of California at Los Angeles three days later, no one who had witnessed Waterman's winning kick and ensuing celebration would soon forget the enormity of the moment.

Now, first-year head coach Chris Little, an assistant under former head coach Darren Powell from 2010-2012, is left with the un-

enviable task of leading the program forward after what many consider the greatest season in program history.

"Every year is a new team," Little said. "Every team starts a new journey for itself. This team has to shape their own journey and build upon the success we've had over the last several years, and that's an exciting challenge."

The task won't be as difficult as it may appear because the Phoenix is a mature team that knows it can't ride on its previous successes.

"I don't think it'll be that difficult to move on," Waterman, now a senior, said. "We'll take the success we had last year and think 'How did we get there?' and look at the keys that made us successful, because the journey we took to get there is more important than the end result."

Elon doesn't want to completely turn the page on last season's magic, but rather build and carry over the confidence and momentum they gained at the end of the season in order to maintain its success.

"We look at this season individually and don't want to dwell too much on the past," said senior goalkeeper Nathan Dean. "But we can definitely look to last season to give us confidence and use the momentum we provided ourselves moving forward."

Little said he isn't worried about his team starting slow this season because of a hang-

over from last year's postseason magic. He trusts his team is experienced enough to turn the page on last fall and refocus for the upcoming season.

Little doesn't sense there will be an issue moving forward because of the team's strong leadership and hunger for continued success on the national stage.

"It's about building upon last year," Little said. "The players' aspirations and our aspirations as a coaching staff are the same. We want to be in contention for the national tournament and competing for conference success."

Despite winning three SoCon titles, making three NCAA tournament appearances and winning the program's first tournament game, there's still one lofty goal they have yet to accomplish.

"The senior class wants to leave as the winningest class in program history," Waterman said. "We look at last year and say 'We won some things and did really well,' but we want this year to be even more special."

To do so, the seniors must lead Elon out from under the shadow of last season's brilliance and work toward making the roars heard reverberating around Rudd Field last fall a regular occurrence for years to come.

For more news and updates on the Elon men's soccer team, please follow @pendulumsports on Twitter and visit elonpendulum.com.

What Jason Waterman says about the CAA:



"We haven't got much into the tape on the CAA. We know it's a really good conference, we know it's deep, we know there aren't going to be any easy games. The margin for error is really small."

Dean, Waterman carry experience vital to Elon's success

Kyle Maher
Senior Reporter

Seniors Nathan Dean and Jason Waterman have had their share of memorable experiences in their four years on the Elon University men's soccer team.

They've not only had success on the pitch with three straight Southern Conference titles and NCAA tournament appearances under their belts, but they have also had the good fortune of playing under the tutelage of some of the program's greatest leaders and mentors.

To replace that leadership, the Phoenix has chosen to employ a more collective approach to leading the team forward.

"We don't want there to be only one or two leaders and everyone else follows," Waterman said. "We think everyone should have the opportunity to lead and step up and have a high accountability for themselves. We want everyone to feel comfortable enough to talk about their job and how to they can work to improve that job."

As seniors, Dean and Waterman are responsible for taking the reins and teaching the younger, less experienced players how to effectively adjust to the college game.

"It's important that upperclassman step up and demonstrate to the younger guys, especially the freshmen, what the 'Elon standard' is about," Waterman said. "Teaching them to win every single drill and to do everything they can to improve their own game to help the team."

In the eyes of Chris Little, Elon's head coach, there could not be two better ambassadors for both his program and the school itself, especially as the program ushers in a new era in the Colonial Athletic Association with heightened expectations after last year's historic NCAA tournament victory.

But it's not just their athletic ability that sets Dean and Waterman apart. Little is quick to point out that each has an impressive academic record and raves about their infectious personalities. Both qualities, he said, make them natural role models for the younger players.

"Nathan and Jason are not only leaders on the field with their performances, but off it as well," Little said. "They're focused on their academic success and how to best represent this university. They are fantastic leaders by example, and hopefully they are able to pass down the standards, val-



FILE PHOTO BY ASHLEY KING

Nathan Dean has started in all 55 of Elon's games in the past two years, accumulating 155 saves.

ues and expectations we expect of them to the younger players."

Dean has no doubt the team's newcomers will have few problems adjusting to their new surroundings, a result of the coaching staff making it a mission to only recruit players they feel can handle the pressure of fulfilling lofty expectations when they step onto campus.

"When the coaching staff recruits people, they do their homework and make it a priority to bring in not only good players, but also the right kind of people who will fit into the environment that we're creating here," Dean said. "The guys who come in are already the kind of people that are going to fit into our system."

In Dean's eyes, the upperclassmen's job is to assist the freshmen in adjusting to the college game. Dean tries to help those from foreign nations, in particular, as he experienced three years ago as a freshman from England.

"It's certainly a step up and can certainly take people a little bit of time to make that adjustment," Dean said. "But we expect that. The main goal for us as a senior class is to help them get to the point where they can add value to our team as quickly as possible."

That adjustment, does not appear to be too steep for this year's incoming class.

"We're seeing already the freshman class bring some special stuff in to training," Dean said. "We hope that they can continue to provide good play because once we get toward the end of the season and we get tired legs, it's a good boost for our team if we have those guys adding value."

With a new class of hungry, self-motivated underclassmen and strong veteran leadership in place, the Phoenix has all the ingredients in place for a fourth straight trip to the NCAA Tournament.



FILE PHOTO BY STEFAN FORTMANN

Daniel Lovitz, seen jumping into the crowd here, is now playing for Toronto FC of Major League Soccer.

Phoenix looks to challenge itself in nonconference slate

Kyle Maher
Senior Reporter

The Elon University men's soccer team's approach to nonconference scheduling is not unique among small programs in non-power conferences.

The team knows that in order to garner national attention and catch the eyes of the national polls — and even the NCAA tournament selection committee — it needs to stack its nonconference slate and boost its tournament resume.

Elon's players embrace the challenge. They consider matches against difficult opponents from power conferences an opportunity to prove themselves on the big stage.

"You don't want to put all your eggs in the conference basket," said senior goalkeeper Nathan Dean. "It's good to play those difficult nonleague games on the road to boost your RPI so that we have a chance to get into the national tournament."

The difficult slate started right away, as the Phoenix beat the University of South Carolina 1-0 in an exhibition on Aug. 19, and lost to North Carolina State University, a perennial contender from the Atlantic Coast Conference, 1-0 in another exhibition Aug. 23.

The beginning of the regular season doesn't get any easier, as Elon will travel to Durham for the John Rennie/Nike Classic hosted by Duke University. There, Elon

will first play Stetson University Aug. 29, followed by Loyola Marymount University on Aug. 31.

Next, the Phoenix heads south to Wilmington for the UNC Wilmington Classic, where it faces Winthrop University on Sept. 5 and Ohio State University on Sept. 7. Both will offer stern tests right off the bat.

"We were looking at a situation where it was a no-brainer," said head coach Chris Little. "All the teams have been in the national tournament consistently in the last few years. Both [tournaments] are relatively local, with great environments and against some of the best teams in the country."

Elon's difficult nonconference slate doesn't stop there. On Sept. 14, the Phoenix will host West Virginia University, which was upset 3-2 at Rudd Field two years ago by the Phoenix while ranked No. 18 in the nation.

Twelve days later, the Phoenix travels to Conway, South Carolina, to try and make it two victories in a row against Coastal Carolina University after beating the sixth-ranked Chanticleers 2-1 last year at Rudd Field to break a four-game losing streak against its regional rival.

The Chanticleers, ranked No. 17 in the NSCAA/Continental Tire Division 1 Men's National Pre-Season rankings, were Elon's rival in both of its NCAA tournament appearances in 2011 and 2012. What's more, the two teams played regular

season matches in both seasons, which resulted in Chanticleers wins, as did the two tournament games.

"They're a great test for us," Little said. "Obviously, we've played each other numerous times over the last several years, and they've always had a ton of talent. It's a game that we're all looking forward to."

Two more manageable games against Florida International University and in-state foe High Point University, neither of which broke .500 last year, are the only breathers mixed in to what is otherwise a daunting slate. But that's exactly the type of challenge Little wants for his team.

"We've always been in the top 30 in the country the last several years," Little said. "We want to continue that. A lot of that ranking is determined by your RPI, which is based on your strength of schedule. To meet those standards, we have to play a tough schedule, and that's always been our philosophy."

At this point, Dean and his teammates have come to embrace their coach's philosophy.

"Difficult games boost our RPI, but it also prepares us for the big games we'll have in conference play," Dean said. "That's been a big help to us in the past few years."



FILE PHOTO BY ASHLEY KING

Elon advanced to the second round of the NCAA Tournament in 2013, defeating Clemson in penalty kicks.

Stalwart linebackers provide backbone for Elon defense



ASHLEY KING | Staff Photographer

Matt Mallian
Assistant Sports Editor

When the Elon University football team takes the field at Duke University's Wallace Wade Stadium on Aug. 30, it will mark a new era in the history of Elon athletics.

The game will be Elon's first official appearance in the Colonial Athletic Association after 10 years in the Southern Conference. It will be an uphill battle, since the CAA is undoubtedly a bigger brand of football than the SoCon. But with seniors Odell Benton and Jonathan Spain and sophomore John Silas manning the middle of Phoenix defense, the transition will be a little easier.

The Phoenix lost many key contributors

record of 2-10 in 2013 that culminated in the firing of head coach Jason Swepson, Benton, Spain and Silas still found success in an underwhelming season.

Spain, a fifth-year senior from Greensboro, led the team in tackles for the second straight year with 84 in 2013. He was named the team's Most Outstanding Linebacker, which added to his list of career accolades that includes a second-team All-SoCon award in 2012 and an appearance on the SoCon All-Freshman Team in 2011.

After taking a medical redshirt in 2012, Silas had a breakout season in 2013, amassing 71 total tackles, good for second on the team, including a career-best 14 tackle performance against Georgia Southern University Nov. 16. Silas's impressive campaign did

that expectation level. They've got to come out every day and set that bar a little higher. They've got to say, 'I'm going to take my game to the next level.' So far I think they've done it."

On the defensive side, Jerry Petercuskie takes over as defensive coordinator, bringing a wealth of football knowledge to Elon with him. Petercuskie has almost 40 years of coaching experience at historically strong football institutions like Boston College, the University of Virginia and Pennsylvania State University. Most recently, he was in charge of recruiting and special teams at North Carolina State University from 2007-2012.

During his time at NC State, Petercuskie coached wide receiver/return specialist T.J. Graham and kicker Steven Hauschka. Graham was drafted by the Buffalo Bills in 2012 and has scored three touchdowns in the past two seasons. Hauschka went undrafted in 2008 and bounced around from team to team until 2011, when he found a permanent home with the Seattle Seahawks. In 2013, he made 33-of-35 field goal attempts, helping the Seahawks win their first Super Bowl in franchise history.

"He's got a great composure. He's kind of been there, done that, and he's seen a lot of football in his 40 years of coaching, so I think the kids have really adapted to him well," Skrosky said. "For a 60-plus-year-old guy, he's got a great energy level. So I think the defensive unit has really bought in to what

he's teaching. When you're young you don't think much about experience, but there really is no substitute for it and he certainly brings a lot of that to the table."

When players talk of Petercuskie's experience, it's almost hard for them to believe how much of it he has.

"He's been around forever," Silas said. "He knows a lot of stuff."

If being around the coaching ranks for nearly a half-century earns you anything, it's respect. And because of all the places he's been, the players listen to what he has to say.

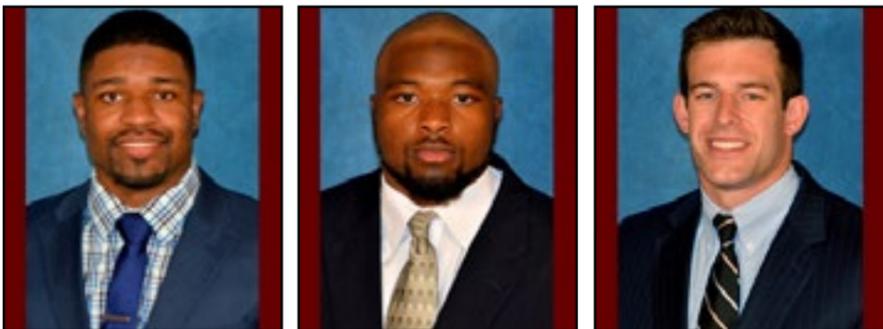
"When he talks, everybody listens," Benton said. "When you got a guy that's been around the game for a lot of years and seen a lot of good players, you know he knows talent and you know he knows what it takes to win."

When talking about Petercuskie, Spain added something obvious, yet telling about his experience level.

"You don't last this long if you don't know your stuff," said Spain.

Petercuskie's experience will be put to the test Aug. 30, when the Phoenix will travel to Duke to take on the Blue Devils for the first time since 2010, when Skrosky was serving as Elon's offensive coordinator under head coach Pete Lembo.

Follow @pendulumsports on Twitter, along with Sports Editor Tommy Hamzik (@THamzikElon) and Assistant Sports Editor Matt Mallian (@mattmallian).



From left to right: Benton, Silas and Spain are three key contributors to the defensive unit.

from the 2013 defensive unit to graduation, so the returning trio of Benton, Spain and Silas is all the more important.

"The [experience] is huge because you know how everyone plays," Spain said. "I've played next to these guys for years so I kind of know how they play and how to feed off of them. All those guys up front, I know how they play so even if it's a new system you can work off each other."

Benton echoed Spain's words, noting that the chemistry within the group has been vital for the defense's adjustment to a new system.

"We know each other so we know how to get each other going," Benton said. "We know the things we can say to each other to get that edge going. The chemistry is really high on defense, and I think that's really helped us to come along."

While the Phoenix struggled to a paltry

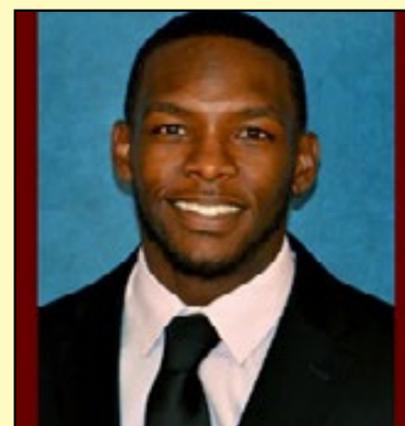
not go unnoticed, as he was named the team's Most Outstanding Defensive Player, while also being added to the SoCon All-Freshman Team.

Benton, a senior out of Jacksonville, North Carolina, has been a contributor for the Elon defense since 2011, when he made two starts as a true freshman. In 2012, Benton started all 11 games for the Phoenix. He appeared in 10 games last season, making 33 total stops, including a career-best seven tackles against No. 11 Coastal Carolina.

First-year head coach Rich Skrosky, only eight months on the job, already sees the trio as leaders for his football team.

"I've challenged those guys just about every day, and I think the biggest thing with Odell, Jonathan and John is their bar," said Skrosky. "My expectation level for them is really high and it's a matter of them meeting

What Kierre Brown says about the CAA:



"Even though they lost a few top schools, the SoCon was definitely a good league. It helped us gain a lot of experience. I feel like we're ready to hit the CAA running."

2014 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

DUKE



AUG. 30 - 6 P.M. at Durham

TV: ESPN3

2013 RECORD: 10-4, 6-2 ACC

PLAYER TO WATCH: Fifth-year senior quarterback Anthony Boone – With Boone under center, the Blue Devils went 7-0 to close out the regular season.

NC A&T



SEPT. 13 - 6 P.M. at Elon

2013 RECORD: 7-4, 4-4 MEAC

PLAYER TO WATCH: Sophomore running back Tarik Cohen – Cohen led the MEAC in yards per carry (5.9) and was named MEAC Rookie of the Year in 2013.

CHARLOTTE



SEPT. 20 - 7 P.M. at Elon

TV: American Sports Network

2013 RECORD: 5-6 (independent)

PLAYER TO WATCH: Sophomore wide receiver Austin Duke – Duke was the 49ers' leading receiver, hauling in a team-high 62 catches for 727 yards and six scores.

COASTAL CAROLINA



SEPT. 27 - 7 P.M. at Conway, S.C.

TV: American Sports Network

2013 RECORD: 12-3, 4-1 Big South

PLAYER TO WATCH: Junior quarterback Alex Ross – Against Elon in 2013, Ross led an offense that racked up 652 total yards of offense.

NEW HAMPSHIRE



OCT. 4 - 1:30 P.M. at Elon

2013 RECORD: 10-5, 6-2 CAA

PLAYER TO WATCH: Junior linebacker Akil Anderson - Anderson stood out and racked up 124 tackles and 5.5 sacks over the course of the season.

DELAWARE



OCT. 11 - 3:30 P.M. at Newark, Del.

2013 RECORD: 7-5, 4-4 CAA

PLAYER TO WATCH: Senior quarterback Trent Hurley – Hurley finished 2013 with a pass efficiency rating of 155.2, the best mark in the CAA.

STONY BROOK



OCT. 18 - 1:30 P.M. at Elon

2013 RECORD: 5-6, 3-5 CAA

PLAYER TO WATCH: Senior defensive back Christian Ricard – Ricard was named to the All-CAA second team in 2013 and was a preseason second team All-CAA selection by College Sports Madness.

RICHMOND



OCT. 25 - 3 P.M. at Elon

2013 RECORD: 6-6, 4-4 CAA

PLAYER TO WATCH: Senior quarterback Michael Strauss – Strauss holds the Richmond record for completions, attempts, yards and touchdowns in a season.

TOWSON



NOV. 1 - 4 P.M. at Towson, Md.

2013 RECORD: 13-3, 6-2 CAA

PLAYER TO WATCH: Senior defensive end Ryan Delaire – Delaire, who was named to the All-CAA first team, is considered a legitimate defensive end prospect for the 2015 NFL Draft.

WILLIAM & MARY



NOV. 8 - 3:30 P.M. at Williamsburg, Va.

TV: Comcast SportsNet

2013 RECORD: 7-5, 4-4 CAA

PLAYER TO WATCH: Junior defensive end Mike Reilly – Reilly was a first-team All-CAA selection and earned third-team All-America honors from the Associated Press.

MAINE



NOV. 15 - 3 P.M. at Elon

2013 RECORD: 10-3, 7-1 CAA

PLAYER TO WATCH: Sophomore linebacker Christophe Mulumba – Mulumba finished 2013 with a team-high 118 tackles and was named to the All-CAA First Team and was also CAA Defensive Rookie of the Year.

JAMES MADISON



NOV. 22 - 12 P.M. at Harrisonburg, Va.

2013 RECORD: 6-6, 3-5 CAA

TV: American Sports Network

PLAYER TO WATCH: Junior quarterback Vad Lee – Lee played his last two seasons at Georgia Tech. He scored 32 total touchdowns there, including three in the Yellow Jackets' 70-0 victory against Elon in 2013.

Elon running back trio limps through preseason

Matt Mallian
Assistant Sports Editor

The Elon University football team has had a number of players fighting for positions in its 2014 preseason.

At the running back position, it was a three-way battle for the top spot between senior Karl Bostick, junior Tracey Coppedge and sophomore B.J. Bennett. But what was once thought to be a platoon position for the Phoenix has now turned into a need for bodies on the field.

"You always need three," said Elon head coach Rich Skrosky. "It's not a matter of, 'do you want to have three?' You always need three during the season."

Heading into preseason camp, running back was a position of strength for Elon after the trio of running backs combined for a solid 2013 campaign. In fact, the similarities

between the three players' 2013 stat lines are eerie.

As a redshirt freshman, Bennett led the team with 477 yards rushing on 123 carries, plus four touchdowns. Bostick, who transferred from the University of Akron, rushed for 443 yards in his second year with the Phoenix, also scoring four times on the season. Coppedge finished 2013 second on the team with 447 rushing yards on just 90 carries, good for a 4.8-yard average, best on the team.

After the first scrimmage of camp Aug. 11, Skrosky still viewed the running back position as one that was up for grabs. But now they may need more than three in the competition.

Coppedge got the most carries in the first scrimmage, but has dealt with a concussion more recently that has kept him off the field. Bennett was also sidelined with a broken hand, which left the door open for Bostick.

But Bostick's solid camp was derailed as well when the senior suffered a broken leg and was carted off the field in the team's third scrimmage Aug. 20. Skrosky later said that Bostick is expected to be out until at least late October.

The serious injury to Bostick, as well as the more minor ones to Coppedge and Bennett, is a big blow to an Elon offense that relied heavily on the run game last season.

"He's got the moves. I like how he plays because he's elusive and makes people miss," senior linebacker Jonathan Spain said of Coppedge. "He's the hardest person that I've had to tackle in a couple years."

"I think we have a good mix between speed, power and having veteran experience," senior linebacker Odell Benton said.

No matter who is on the field at the running back position, something different will be

brought to the table. If it's Coppedge, elusiveness will be on display. If it's Bostick or Bennett, it will be more of a smash mouth style of football. But with all three off the field, the offense is losing some firepower.

All three running backs are friends off the field, and they know what's at stake on the field — playing time.

"Since the first day of college, it's always been a competition," said Coppedge. "Your spot is never guaranteed, so you always have to work harder than you worked the day before."

The chemistry within the group is palpable, each willing to push the other to be his best. Now, it will be up to each one of them to push each other to get back on the field.

For more Elon football news and notes, follow @pendulumsports on Twitter and visit elopen-dulum.com.

Elon women's soccer schedule

Elon 2, Liberty 0 #
Elon 5, Catawba 0 #

Aug. 22

Elon 2, Jacksonville State 0

Aug. 24

Appalachian State 3, Elon 1

vs. Clemson

Aug. 29 - 2 p.m.

at West Virginia

Aug. 31 - 1 p.m.

at High Point

Sept. 5 - 7 p.m.

at East Carolina

Sept. 7 - 2 p.m.

vs. Coastal Carolina[^]

Sept. 12 - 5 p.m.

vs. Francis Marion[^]

Sept. 14 - 12 p.m.

vs. Gardner-Webb

Sept. 20 - 7 p.m.

vs. Hofstra^{*}

Sept. 26 - 7 p.m.

vs. Northeastern^{*}

Sept. 28 - 1 p.m.

at College of Charleston^{*}

Oct. 3 - 7 p.m.

at UNC Wilmington

Oct. 5 - 2 p.m.

vs. Drexel^{*}

Oct. 10 - 7 p.m.

vs. Delaware^{*}

Oct. 12 - 2 p.m.

at William & Mary^{*}

Oct. 19 - 2 p.m.

at Towson^{*}

Oct. 24 - 3 p.m.

at James Madison^{*}

Oct. 26 - 1 p.m.

CAA Quarterfinals^{*}

Nov. 2, Location TBD

CAA Semifinals^{*}

Nov. 7, Location TBD

CAA Championship^{*}

Nov. 9, Location TBD

denotes exhibition

[^] denotes UNCW Hilton Garden Inn
Mayfaire Invitational in Wilmington, NC

* denotes CAA game

Who will score the goals?

Phoenix looks to replicate offensive success



Elon scored in all 22 games in 2013, the first time it has accomplished such a feat in program history. The last time the Phoenix was shut out was Nov. 2, 2012. ASHLEY KING | Staff Photographer

Jordan Spritzer
Senior Reporter

The Elon University women's soccer team comes off an impressive 2013 campaign with a record of 13-3-6, with one of the three losses in the Southern Conference Championship game against Furman University.

Elon's tremendous run was on the tail end of a season-long offensive outburst. But the 2014 version of the Phoenix will be without many of the players who led the team to the conference final.

"There's a lot of unanswered questions as to who exactly we're going to be," said Elon head women's soccer coach Chris Neal. "Time will tell, and my only expectation is to take it day by day and make sure we get better as a team."

Star forward and reigning SoCon Player of the Year Nicole Dennion will miss the 2014 season via a redshirt year. With Jennifer McGorty and Catherine Brinkman graduated, the Phoenix has lost each of its top three goal scorers from last year.

"We scored 56 goals last year, and 42 of those goals are not returning," Neal said.

Elon's 56 goals ranked eighth nationally in scoring offense. Elon's opponents also failed to post a shutout in any of the 22 matches.

Senior forward Marissa Russo is the highest returning goal scorer for Elon, racking up five goals and four assists. Russo said she believes she will need to increase her production in her senior year.

"Entering the [Colonial Athletic Association], I have to increase [my scoring]. [I'm] definitely going to have to score more goals and have more assists if we're going to compete," Russo said.

Last year, the Phoenix was able to rely on Dennion's lethal season. The Ewing, New Jersey, native racked up 15 of the team's 56 goals. The team is set up for a more balanced attack in 2014.

"The goals are going to come from everyone," said sophomore defender Erin Tanhauser. "I think we're all going to step up."

In addition to a balanced scoring

attack, Elon feels its style of play will yield plenty of goals. Neal's system has the Phoenix playing a fast-paced style of soccer. For example, once the ball is lost, each player will be looking to win the ball back immediately. This philosophy may seem obvious, but aggressive defense can result in goals on the other end.

"All of our goals come from our style of play of hard defending that puts the other team under pressure, so they make mistakes that we can capitalize off of," said junior midfielder Taylor Glenn.

In terms of personnel, the Phoenix will use a variety of players in an effort to replicate last year's offensive outburst. Neal admits he is still uncertain who will be the ones to lead the offense, but he's excited about his options.

"There's a lot of question marks up top, [but] there's also a lot of opportunity for not only the returners, but also for the freshmen," Neal said.

Elon's front three will look a bit different this year. Russo will once again line up on the right wing, but some different faces will occupy the central and left-sided forward positions. Freshman Grace Bennett is eager to get her shot up top for the Phoenix. The Rocky River, Ohio native has turned heads in the early goings thus far.

"Her fitness has been off the charts," Neal said.

Bennett has been playing mostly in the right forward position behind Russo, but she said she believes she and the rest of the freshmen are poised to make an impact.

"The freshmen are ready to step up to whatever the coaches ask of us," Bennett said.

Freshman Sue Anderson and senior Raychel Diver will look to fill the void at the center forward position. Diver played as a midfielder in 2013, but Neal moved her to the forward spot during their spring sessions.

"She's getting thrown into a role where she's going to get a lot more minutes," Neal said.

Anderson, a native of Jacksonville, Florida, will look to be a scoring threat in the air.

"Goals are going to come from our

outside forwards crossing it in to players who are hungry in front of the net and wanting to score," Russo said.

Elon will also look to get its fullbacks ahead from its defensive lines to provide further options to cross the ball into the box. With a tall 5-foot-10-inch frame, Anderson could find herself on the end of a number of crosses this season.

On the left side, sophomore Hannah Howard and freshman Sydney Schilling will be battling for minutes. Both call Florida home, with Howard hailing from Sarasota and Schilling from Oviedo.

There's another trio that is looking to continue Elon's explosive offense — the midfield. The Phoenix's three midfield positions in the center of the pack are the lynchpin of Elon's attack.

"Out of midfield, we require a whole lot out of work rate. Those players log a lot of mileage every game, and just three players won't get it done for us," Neal said.

With such a high tempo playing style, Neal recognizes the need to use the squad's depth to keep the players' legs fresh.

"We're going to use at least six players to be a six-headed monster for us in the middle of the park and dominate the space between the [defensive and forward] lines," he said.

Neal added that sophomore midfielder Kelly Siewers can play a key role linking up play with the forwards.

"We're really expecting big things from Siewers in the attacking center midfield role," Neal said. "She came in really fit, and we're excited about what she can bring to the table for us."

Siewers appeared in all but one match in 2013. She featured mainly as a substitute but managed to tally two goals and an assist to her name.

After being picked eighth in the CAA preseason polls, it would be easy to call last season's goal surge a one-and-done. But the team is confident in its system and one another.

"We're going to go out and try to replicate the success we had last year," Neal said. "We're not going to change anything out of the gate. We're going to carry on being who we are. Hopefully the personnel can rise to the challenge."

Elon uses tough nonconference slate to prepare for CAA

Jordan Spritzer
Senior Reporter

As Elon University is poised to kick off its inaugural Colonial Athletic Association campaign, fans and players alike are eager to check out each new opponent the Phoenix will face.

For the Elon women's soccer team, there are plenty of exciting fixtures before its conference opener Sept. 26 against Hofstra University.

"We've got a full spectrum of teams and RPI [Rankings]," said Elon women's soccer coach Chris Neal.

The Phoenix will once again have a formidable nonconference schedule that includes matchups with two power conference schools: the Big 12's West Virginia University and the Atlantic Coast Conference's Clemson University.

Elon rekindled its Southern Conference rivalry with Appalachian State University in the team's second game of the year. Appalachian State won 3-1.

After a pair of exhibition contests against Liberty University and Catawba College, the Phoenix opened up its season with a 2-0 victory against Jacksonville State University Aug. 22. With matches against Jacksonville State, Appalachian State and Clemson, Elon opens with three consecutive home games at Rudd Field.

"It's going to be a great homestand," said junior midfielder Taylor Glenn.

As a young team that's still learning to play with one another, Elon could use a homestand to start the year.

"It'll be great to play together and get our style down," said senior forward Marissa Russo.

The contest with Appalachian State was one between two teams who know each other very well.

"It [was] nice to see some familiar faces," said sophomore defender Erin Tanhauser.

Last season, neither team was able to get the better of the other as the match ended in a 3-3 draw. In 2012, the teams split their two meetings with Elon losing to the Mountaineers in the regular season,

but knocked out their rivals in the opening round of the SoCon tournament.

On Aug. 24, Appalachian State scored three goals during an 11-minute span in the second half for the victory.

Although both schools have left the SoCon for larger pastures (Appalachian State is now in the Sun Belt Conference), the meeting was an opportunity to rekindle a fierce rivalry.

"When we play App State it's always a physical, tough game," Russo said. "It's a game of who wants it more."

Neal said he enjoys scheduling not only Appalachian State but also other in-state rivals.

"I think it's really important to continue those in-state rivalries," Neal said. "Those are always great games. Both teams don't have to travel very far, and there's a lot of coaching friendships. A lot of players have friends and family that may have ended up at other schools, so there's that unique element as well."

Neal added how beating in-state rivals can boost Elon's reputation in the recruiting game. He said creating a recruiting hotbed within the state can give Elon a much-needed boost heading into a new conference.

"[The CAA] is a league that, from a women's soccer perspective, has a richer tradition than the Southern Conference," Neal said.

Admittedly, many CAA schools have the tradition and history to recruit top talent. But Neal said he feels Elon's program is making the necessary adjustments.

The Phoenix will face two more in-state rivals to open up the month of September. The Phoenix will travel to take on High Point University Sept. 5, and will stay on the road to take on East Carolina University in Greenville two days later.

After Appalachian State comes to town, the Phoenix will wrap up its homestand with a matchup against Clemson. It will kick off two straight matches against power conference schools as the Phoenix heads to Morgantown, West Virginia, to take on West Virginia University. This will mark



Elon renewed its SoCon rivalry with Appalachian State Aug. 24. The Mountaineers won 3-1. ASHLEY KING | Staff Photographer

the first time since 2012 that the Phoenix has faced a team from a "big five" conference. During that season, Elon faced three of them, drawing with the Big East's University of Cincinnati and losing to the ACC's Duke University and North Carolina State University.

It was a tough stretch for the Phoenix, as it scored only one goal in three matches. But this squad is excited for a new opportunity.

"[These games] challenge us and force us to be better players," Russo said.

The games against Clemson and West Virginia will give the Phoenix an opportunity to close in on its season-long goal.

"These games will be great opportunities for us to increase our national ranking," Glenn said. "Last year, we broke into the top 75, and this year our goal is to get into the top 50. If we can get good results against good teams like that it'll really help us out."

In all, what the Phoenix wants is a solid preparation for its inaugural CAA season. The team has a one-game-at-a-time approach, but Glenn admitted it's the conference games that "matter the most." With a new conference comes new challenges, and aside from unfamiliar opponents, the conference brings with it a decidedly heightened level of play. For Neal, the matchups with West Virginia and Clemson will prepare the team for the new competition.

"Playing the Clemsons and West Vir-

ginias will give us a better idea of how we can athletically match up against the James Madisons, the William & Marys, and Hofstras of the CAA," Neal said.

Neal, who served as an assistant at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington for eight years, knows firsthand the top-level athletes that grace the CAA.

"You're going to have less time and space on the ball," Neal said. "The level of athletes in the Colonial is going to make it very uncomfortable. It's going to be a faster game."

He found the Phoenix was the most athletic team on the field in almost all of its conference matchups last year, but knows this year will be a completely different story.

"The hurdle for us, in the first year, is we're going to face some teams that are more athletic than us," Neal said.

Elon will have nine non-conference matches before it gets into the swing of conference play. After posting a 6-1-2 record in last year's non-conference slate, there's certainly a lot to look forward to.

Regardless of how things go, Neal is committed to making adjustments to get the team playing the right way.

"Based on how we do in the non-conference, we may have to change tactics to compete the way we want to compete in the Colonial," he said.

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Elon faces Coastal Carolina and Francis Marion in mid-September as part of a UNC Wilmington event. RACHEL INGERSOLL | Staff Photographer

What Bethany Houpt says about the CAA:



"It's going to be more demanding. The teams are a little bit more athletic than we're used to coming off of the SoCon. Definitely a new challenge and I think some people mistakenly pick us as maybe an underdog, and we're ready to take on that challenge."

Elon volleyball Schedule

Elon Phoenix Classic vs. Maryland,
San Jose State, Liberty
Aug. 29-30

KSU Owls Invitational vs. Ken-
nesaw State, Purdue, UNC Asheville
Sept. 5-6

vs. High Point
Sept. 10 - 7 p.m.

Campbell Tournament vs. North
Florida, South Carolina, Campbell
Sept. 12-13

vs. North Carolina A&T
Sept. 17 - 7 p.m.

Wake Forest Tournament vs. West-
ern Carolina, Winthrop, Wake Forest
Sept. 19-20

at North Carolina Central
Sept. 23 - 7 p.m.

vs. Hofstra*
Sept. 26 - 7 p.m.

vs. Northeastern*
Sept. 28 - 2 p.m.

at James Madison*
Oct. 2 - 7 p.m.

at William & Mary*
Oct. 4 - 7 p.m.

at UNC Greensboro
Oct. 7 - 7 p.m.

vs. UNC Wilmington*
Oct. 11 - 7 p.m.

vs. Towson*
Oct. 16 - 7 p.m.

vs. Delaware*
Oct. 18 - 7 p.m.

vs. College of Charleston*
Oct. 19 - 3 p.m.

at Northeastern*
Oct. 24 - 7 p.m.

at Hofstra*
Oct. 26 - 1 p.m.

vs. William & Mary*
Oct. 31 - 7 p.m.

vs. James Madison*
Nov. 2 - 2 p.m.

at UNC Wilmington*
Nov. 5 - 7 p.m.

at College of Charleston*
Nov. 8 - 5 p.m.

at Delaware*
Nov. 14 - 7 p.m.

at Towson*
Nov. 15 - 7 p.m.

CAA Championships*
Nov. 21-24, Location TBD

Elon keeps defense at forefront



Georgia Southern won the SoCon Tournament in 2013 and beat Elon three times. The CAA, namely College of Charleston, poses a bigger threat offensively.

Tommy Hamzik
Sports Editor

With the losses of starting libero Maggie Reichard and setter and right side Cali Estes to graduation, the Elon University volleyball team has defense on its mind entering the 2014 season.

Elon looks to sophomore defensive specialist Morgan Maner to take on a bigger role and to both setters for more focus on their defensive presence.

Maner, from Burlington, started 2013 at libero before transitioning into a defensive specialist role while Reichard took the libero spot. Maner accounted for 262 digs, or 2.2 per set.

"The libero position comes with a lot of leadership," said head coach Mary Tendler. "Being so young, that's something she's working on, as far as talking to the other players on the court and telling them positions and all that kind of stuff. She's working on her leadership skills as well."

With Reichard gone, Maner seems like the logical choice to step in at libero. Sophomore Chelsea Rafetto and senior Chanelle Smith are competing in the back row as well. Rafetto redshirted last year and played in 19 games — mostly at setter — in 2012. Smith is also an outside hitter.

Her teammates said Maner is motivated for the challenge ahead.

"She definitely isn't backing down," said redshirt-freshman setter Sydel Curry. "She's accepting the challenge that's ahead of her. She's super aggressive, even in her everyday life. She'll never be down for long, if she is down at all. She's always challenging herself and challenging us. I think she'll have a good season."

Elon averaged 14.1 digs per set in 2013. That ranked ninth in the Southern Conference, but the Colonial Athletic Association is a much stronger conference.

Maner is looking to improve that number in the back row, and has other things she's working on.

"I probably need to be more vocal," Maner said. "I'm focusing on owning my time on the court, which I think I'm doing a lot better job of this year than last year."

Curry and junior Ana Nicksic are competing for the setter spot, and Tendler has had a special message for the two of them since spring practice.

"A lot of times, setters focus so much on setting the ball that the other parts of their game don't get developed as quickly," Tendler said. "Defensively, we've pushed both of them to be better defenders, and they have been. They're making plays that they normally didn't make."

Tendler related that message back to how it makes the team succeed.

"If the ball's coming their way and we're getting digs, getting swings out of it, that's a good thing," she said. "You can't just do one thing on the volleyball court."

Nicksic, while tallying 818 assists last season, also had 218 digs. She's had defense in the back of her mind for the last few years — and it's consistently getting better.

"I've always had to work on defense," Nicksic said. "For me, I definitely know it's gotten better. It's not something I dread. You have to have grit and just go for it. I kind of realized that more."

As a whole, Tendler's message has gotten through. And if it keeps progressing, defense could become a strength of the team by season's end.

"Our defense looks really good," Smith said. "I think that'll be our strongest aspect of our team. We're a lot faster, a lot more aggressive on defense."



Morgan Maner, center, played at both libero and defensive specialist as a freshman in 2013.

More in the Middle

Harris, Karle supply sharp middle blocker combo for Elon



Senior Kris Harris, left, and sophomore Ally Karle, right, will be key components to Elon's success in 2014. Harris is working her way back from knee surgery, while Karle filled in last year when Harris was hurt.

JANE SEIDEL | Photo Editor

Tommy Hamzik
Sports Editor

One moment of shock and disappointment for Kris Harris became a gateway to success for Ally Karle.

Nearly a year after Harris had a season-ending knee injury, the Elon University volleyball team has two capable middle blockers going into a season with almost its entire roster back and a heightened level of expectation entering the Colonial Athletic Association.

Harris, a senior, is working her way back from a knee injury suffered last October to team up with sophomore Karle, who stepped in when Harris went down, to form a formidable tandem of middles at the center of the net for Elon.

Power conference foes and untested waters in the CAA await Elon as the season commences, and it'll be Harris and Karle that carry the Phoenix in its quest to develop and play to a higher standard.

"They're such strong girls, very athletic for their age," sophomore outside hitter Kayla Agae said of Harris and Karle. "Going up as big as possible, shutting down the other hitters, funneling that ball to our defense — they're just making it work really well."

Heartbreak for Harris

It was the first set of a Friday evening game at Alumni Gym against The Citadel. Harris, as usual, was patrolling the middle as Elon scrapped its way to a 10-7 lead. On the ensuing point, Harris went down awkwardly on her left knee.

It became the last point she played that season. She had surgery soon after.

It was a tough moment that led to even tougher days for Harris, watching from the sidelines as Elon lost eight of its next 12 games, falling in the first round to Georgia Southern University and concluding the campaign with a mark of 16-17.

Through it all, Harris looked to her teammates for continuous support and used what she remembered from undergoing shoulder surgery as a freshman in high school.

"It's been a long road," Harris said. "I know at first, probably the hardest was

post-surgery, the couple months after surgery, especially being on crutches and whatnot. I've really been working on strengthening my muscle in my quad and my hamstring, working on jumping and single-leg stuff. Just trying to get my left knee back to where my right knee is."

As practice began for Elon in early August, Harris was still slowly getting back to full strength. She planned to play in full scrimmages shortly before the season opener Aug. 29 against the University of Maryland and return to the court sometime early in the year.

"With any injury, you take it day by day and see what happens," said Elon head coach Mary Tendler. "Once she can get past a certain level of doing something, then we take her to the next level. When she gets in her first actual match for her senior year, that's going to be huge for us. Not just what she can provide for us on the court, but just the emotional lift."

Harris, from Apex, has started at middle blocker in 69 of 81 matches she's played at Elon dating back to her freshman year. She's amassed 601 kills and 231 blocks in that time.

"She brings a lot of energy. She's really aggressive," said senior outside hitter Chanelle Smith. "Hopefully we can get back to that point with her this season so she can finish her career ballin' basically like she usually does."

Karle's opportunity

With Harris out, something was missing in the middle for Elon. The day after her injury, her absence was noted — Georgia Southern hit .284 against the Phoenix in a three-set triumph.

"Believe me, there was a big gap when we lost her," said junior setter Ana Nicksic. "It totally was not fun."

That's where Karle filled in.

A freshman role player still adjusting to the college game, Karle became a go-to middle for Elon with sophomore Catherine Head also missing time to injury. Karle finished the year with 172 kills (tied for fifth on the team) and 87 total blocks (best on the team), garnering a spot on the SoCon All-Freshman team.

"Ally took what was handed to her and didn't just settle for it," said redshirt

freshman setter Sydel Curry. "She took it and ran with it. She made the best out of it, and it helped us a lot. She definitely showed what she's really about."

Karle, from Flanders, New Jersey, was crushed for Harris, but knew an opportunity had presented itself.

"Of course I had in my mind, 'This is my chance, make or break. I need to prove myself now because I might not get another chance,'" Karle said. "But at the same time, besides just me getting a chance and proving myself, I had to step up and try to do what [Harris] was doing for the team because I know we needed that."

That momentum and aggressive mindset have carried into this preseason, where Karle is once again on top of her game.

"It's definitely like a push," Karle said of her play at the end of last year. "Any doubts you might have had, like, 'Oh, it's really hard,' you can look and say, 'Oh, I can do it.'"

Off the floor, Karle's teammates described her as a "sweetheart" and said they routinely watch movies and go bowling together.

"She's very family-oriented," Agae said of Karle. "She loves being with her family, loves being with her friends. She cares for what other people are doing and really wants to include others. It's awesome to have a friend, a best friend with you."

Putting it all together

Looking back, Harris channels her

thoughts and quickly comes to an optimistic viewpoint when looking at her injury.

"At first, I was like, 'Why did this happen to me?'" Harris said. "Then I realized it was better that it happened then than happening my senior year, or even later in the season where I can't compete my whole senior year. The timing worked out."

Tendler acknowledged, too, sometimes injuries can come to show new strengths and previously unknown depth on a team.

"There's always a positive. When someone's out, someone else comes in and steps in," Tendler said. "Ally did a great job of coming in and doing her job. She progressed a lot quicker her freshman year probably than she would have if Kris was healthy the whole year. Now, all of a sudden, I have a sophomore middle blocker that's experienced."

Harris and Karle aren't Elon's only middles, though. Head has shown potential in the past, and there's been nothing but good reviews on freshman Michelle Klein.

"As a defensive player, it's nice to have some hands up there that'll take away some court," said sophomore defensive specialist Morgan Maner.

And that's just what they'll do.

After a second half of 2013 that featured emotional and athletic highs and lows, Kris Harris and Ally Karle are back to enforce the middle, pairing up to create the presence at the net Elon needs to hold its own.

What Danielle Smith says about the CAA:



"Going into the new conference, we have a little bit of a chip on our shoulder because the teams we've played previously that were in the CAA, we've lost to. Now, we're like, 'OK, we're going to come back and beat y'all when we're in y'all's conference.'"

Men's cross country relies on leadership, motivation from top

Kate Murphy
Senior Reporter

The Elon University cross country team recently experienced some major changes in the program, but the men's team hasn't lost its focus.

"The important thing is that we're all still together," said senior Ari Rothschild. "It's different, but our goal is going to be the same. We want to progress as athletes and individuals on the course and off."

The expectation is the same: the best finish in Elon history. With three seniors who know the program and have developed in it, the team is relying on their leadership this season, especially with head coach Nick Polk being hired so late in the summer.

"Coming in as a freshman, you're already overwhelmed with the changes of college and then not having a coach that you had that relationship with," said freshman Will Leopold. "But the senior guys will guide us in the right direction."

Not having that established relationship with a coach could be a detriment to any team, but the trust between Polk and his runners is what's going to maintain a good environment.

"We have to give it 100 percent. He's so passionate about what he does, and we're really excited to be working with him," Rothschild said of Polk.

Cross country is an individual sport, although when it comes to designing workouts that involve up to 12 miles of running and aerobic fitness, guidance from the coach is essential.

"We wouldn't be in the shape that we're in without the work of the coach and how he trains us," Rothschild said. "And that's a huge part of our sport. We're only racing for a small part of the season. It's mostly training."

For Rothschild, the coach's role is invaluable come race day.

"You talk about strategy and certain splits in the race, but at the end of the

day, it's just you, the runner out there," he said. "The coach is big on motivation before the race."

It may just be the individual runner on the course, but coming up on mile 5 on race day, there's also an incentive to keep going for others.

"The relationship with the coach is important because if you're not happy or don't have a good connection, you're not going to run fast for them," Leopold said.

Another source of motivation for these athletes to go the extra mile is their teammates running next to them.

"If you feel close to your teammates, you're going to want to fight harder in meets and run the extra miles in practice," Rothschild said. "It makes us want to work harder to reach our personal goals and help everyone else reach their goals as well. It's a crucial part of cross country."

In a sport like cross country, one single misstep could ruin a potentially personal-best time.

This team is going to need this strong camaraderie to make an impact in the Colonial Athletic Association this season.

"There's a lot of big meets that we ha-

ven't been to yet," said Rothschild. "We haven't raced in ones at that caliber, and I'm excited to see what our team can do against that competition."

The Division I collegiate stage is a big one for incoming freshmen. The races are longer, the other runners are faster and the pressure is greater, but that doesn't scare Leopold.

"I'm really excited to be racing again, not knowing anyone's times or who you're racing against," Leopold said. "We're racing against the clock and for the best place possible. I just want to help the team any way I can."

It'll be a change for the entire Phoenix cross country team running against new opponents, but what matters most is that the sweat-stained maroon and gold jerseys surrounding them are still there kicking up dirt.

"It doesn't seem like it's affecting anything when I'm just out there running with my teammates," Rothschild said. "We're only going up from here."

For complete coverage of all Elon athletics, including game recaps, features and more, please visit elonpendulum.com and follow @pendulumsports on Twitter.

What Ari Rothschild says about the CAA:



"I don't think it'll be a difficult transition. I'm excited to see what we can do. We're going to try and get our highest place possible at the conference meet and see what we can do damage wise."

Elon Cross Country Schedule

vs. UNCG Dual
Aug. 30

Elon Invitational
Sept. 13

Adidas Cross Country Challenge
Sept. 19, Cary

Notre Dame Invitational
Oct. 3, South Bend, Ind.

Blue Ridge Open
Oct. 17, Boone

NCAA Pre-Nationals
Oct. 18, Terre Haute, Ind.

CAA Championships
Nov. 1, Boston, Mass.

Three Stripe Invitational
Nov. 8, Cary

NCAA Regional Championships
Nov. 14, Louisville, Ky.

NCAA Championships
Nov. 22, Terre Haute, Ind.

Cross country women look to fill in the pack

Kate Murphy
Senior Reporter

The Elon University women's cross country team had its best season in program history last year with a ninth place finish at the NCAA Southeast Regional Championships, its highest ever.

The team is looking to improve on that ranking and make an immediate impact in the Colonial Athletic Association. One challenge these runners face is new competition without last year's top runner, Allyson Oram.

"I think it's more exciting because you're going into something, and you

have to prove yourself," said senior captain Haylee Dawe. "No one is putting an expectation on you. You are coming and surprising people."

A lone runner taking the lead isn't going to meet that challenge for the women's team this year.

"We don't want to replace one. We want to move our whole pack up a little bit," Dawe said.

According to head coach Nick Polk, on paper there isn't a clear No. 1 runner, and the workouts will show who rises to the top, but the pack has to be strong as a whole.

"It's going to be some of the older

girls mixed in with the freshmen to create a higher-level requirement this year," Polk said. "Leading some of those freshmen into the front pack, that's how we're going to do damage the first year in the CAA."

The runners know they can't just show up and expect somebody else to step up. With most of the top eight runners returning this season, they have to compete together.

"You can't hope one runner is going to fill that spot," said sophomore Kimberly Johansen. "As a team, we have to focus on being there together and being as close as possible because that's more important than having one person out in first place."

Going through training and racing in practices, it's important to learn who does what well.

"Everybody's mileage might be different," Johansen said. "You can read what they would do in a race and learn how everyone else will perform."

What drives Johansen forward is seeing her teammates' jerseys in front of her and knowing they've gotten through the race together.

"When you're running you have to have that bit of 'they're doing this, this is what I have to do,'" Johansen said. "You have to hold yourself accountable because you know your teammates are

expecting certain things."

There are few races throughout the season — only 10 meets on the schedule — and the runners said they want to have good performances at each of them, but they don't have to run their best until competition.

"We've always had mindset that conference and regionals are what matter most," Dawe said. "The whole time we're thinking about those meets. That's when you have to prove that you deserved those rankings."

For runners like Johansen, the thrill of running a 6k and the success both of the individual and the team, is what makes the miles worth it.

"You only have so many opportunities to see it all come together," Johansen said. "When you do, you are so much more happy with it because of all the physical work. We know each other on such a personal, deep level, that you know you weren't randomly placed and just ended up having a good race. There's so much more there."

Despite the many changes this team has been through, the culture and drive that enables each runner to go the extra mile remains the same.

"As a program we fuel off of each other," Dawe said. "And our success comes off of our relationship with each other which hasn't changed."

What Elyse Bierut says about the CAA:



"We feel like it's a whole new year — clean slate pretty much from all angles: new coach, new conference. We're excited. We have high expectations for ourselves. It'll be different, but in a good way. It'll be good to get exposure to teams we haven't really competed against much."