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SENIOR, WIDE RECEIVER



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SOPHOMORE, DEFENDER



BEN PERRON
JUNIOR, CROSS COUNTRY



ALI DEATSCH
SENIOR, DEFENSIVE SPECIALIST



JACLYN WOOD
SENIOR, MIDFIELDER



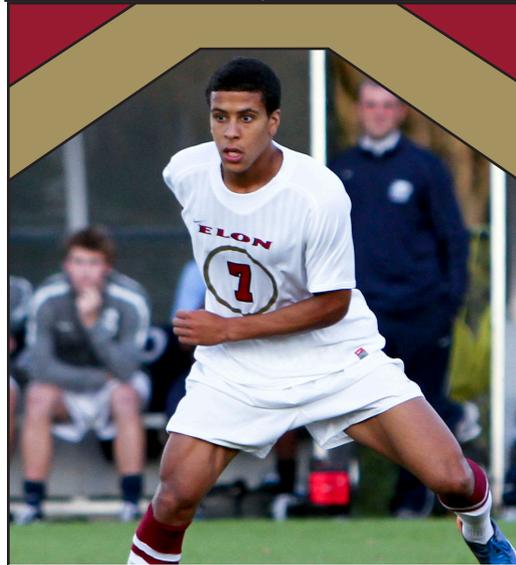
FALL SPORTS PREVIEW

NFL is calling Aaron Mellette (p. 4)
Men's soccer looking for championship repeat (p.8)
Student aids volleyball team (p. 10)

THE PENDULUM



THOMAS WILSON
SENIOR, QUARTERBACK



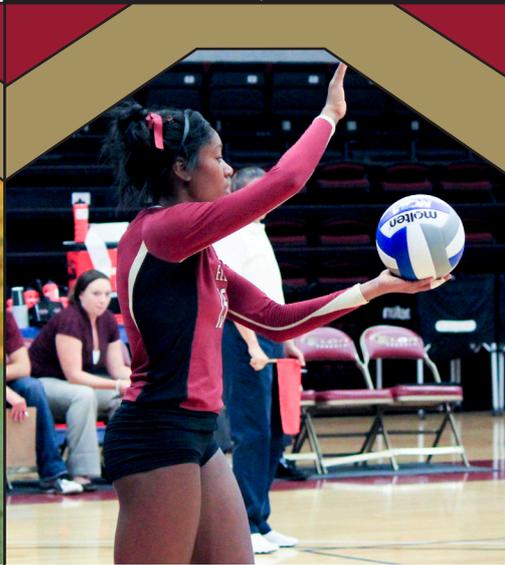
GABE LATIGUE
SENIOR, MIDFIELDER



ALLYSON ORAM
JUNIOR, CROSS COUNTRY



CHRIS THOMAS
SENIOR, FORWARD



CHANELLE SMITH
SOPHOMORE, OUTSIDE HITTER



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THE PENDULUM

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SWEPSON YEAR 2:

Mission improvement

Zachary Horner
Sports Editor

How is the second year under head coach Jason Swepson for the Elon University football team?

The playbook is not new. The coaching staff is not new, besides one exception (new linebackers coach Freddie Aughtry-Lindsay). The quarterback is the same.

But, the Elon University football team expects the results to be different.

"The difference is that we're more comfortable with each other now," said senior wide receiver Jeremy Peterson. "(Last year there were) new coaches, it was the beginning of the season, they didn't know us, we didn't know them. This year, I feel like we're all together, we're all on the same page."

Last season was filled with a whole lot of new. Then-junior quarterback Thomas Wilson was beginning his first year at the helm of the Phoenix offense and Swepson was a Division I head coach for the first time.

It was filled with a lot of discord on and off the field. The Phoenix was second-to-last in the Football Championship Subdivision in turnovers (36) and dealt with off-the-field "finger-pointing," Swepson said.

"That's what happened last year," he said. "I don't think we have that this year. Everyone is supportive of each other. I think we're more together — that togetherness is real this year."

Late last season, Swepson said things such as, "We've got some guys still not buying into the system, and that's what's hurting us at this point."

A 5-6 record will bring that mentality. But things are different this year.

"We know what to expect from the coaches, (and) the coaches know what to expect from us," said Wilson, now a senior. "It's a mutual thing between the players and the coaches. (We've) got those first-year jitters under our belt."

Swepson runs a much more relaxed practice this year, with intensity and optimism on both sides of the ball.

For the offense, eight starters return, including primary playmakers Wilson, Peterson and All-American senior wide receiver Aaron Mellette. With hot NFL prospects, Mellette is expected to bring in a lot of points for the Phoenix this



Head football coach Jason Swepson (white shirt) and his players are more confident in the team this season, hoping to improve on last year's 5-6 record.

File Photo by Al Drago

season.

"I'm trying to push for an even better season, especially in touchdowns," Mellette said. "I'm just trying to be a scoring machine and do whatever I can to help us win."

Swepson said at the end of last season he expects more than the 12 touchdowns Mellette has pulled in each of the last two seasons.

"Catching a lot of balls is great and getting a lot of yards is great, but we need a bunch of touchdowns," Swepson said. "If that number is 20, then we're winning a lot of football games."

Wilson will be attempting to cut down on his 21 interceptions, most in the FCS, from last season and has already seen improvement in practice on that front.

"As an offense, you're not going to win football games turning the ball over," he said. "Turnovers has been a huge thing that we've been working on throughout the spring and over the summer, and now into preseason camp - decreasing the amount of turnovers, protecting the ball, interceptions, fumbles, things of that nature. And we've definitely cut back on those, so that's been a huge step for us, with the turn-

over margin."

On the other side of that turnover margin is the defense, which loses key players in graduated linebacker Joshua Jones and cornerback Jonathan Conner. Led by senior linebacker and defensive captain Blake Thompson, who changed positions from safety during the spring, the defense expects to change things this season. And it starts with the comfort that comes with having a year with the system under their belt.

"This year, we've made huge, huge strides with the defense itself, just making it our own, checking things, because we don't need the help of the coaches anymore," Thompson said. "Everybody's more comfortable with the defense and the system that we're playing and we like it. It's a fun defense, it's a lot of running around, a lot of movement, a lot of blitzes and stuff like that."

And Thompson is confident Jones will not be missed that much because of the players he has playing beside him.

"If somebody drops the gun, somebody else has to be there to pick it up," he added. "So everybody's going to graduate one day. So we're picking up, not just myself, but (redshirt sophomore linebacker Jonathan) Spain, (sophomore

linebacker) Odell Benton, (sophomore safety) Miles (Williams), (junior safety) Chandler (Wrightenberry), we're all picking up that gun and we're shooting."

Swepson said the turnover factor, on both sides of the ball, is the key to this season's success.

"We've got to protect the ball better on offense," he said. "What people don't realize is that last year, the defense didn't create any turnovers, until the last two games."

Jones had a pick-six to seal a victory over Furman University Nov. 12 and Wrightenberry had an interception against Appalachian State University in a loss to the Mountaineers a week later, but the Phoenix had an FCS-worst turnover margin per game of minus-two.

"If we can continue that trend and give our offense a short field, I think we'll be tough to beat," Swepson said. "The bottom line is, we've got to cut down on turnovers (on offense), increase turnovers on defense."

The Phoenix will have an opportunity to do that Sept. 1 against the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a Football Bowl Subdivision and Atlantic Coast Conference foe.

But instead of focusing on its opponents, the Phoenix is looking at the basics: offense, defense and special teams. With veterans senior kicker and captain Adam Shreiner, junior punter Kenton Beal and sophomore long snapper Michael Crispi leading the special teams, and a lot of returners on either side of the ball, Swepson is confident about this season.

"As long as we can win two of the three situations — offense, defense and special teams — you usually win the football game," he said. "I told them some days the defense is going to have a bad day and the offense needs to carry the load with the special teams and vice versa."

Team chemistry is also at an all-time high in the Phoenix locker room at Rhodes Stadium, a significant change from 2011.

"(The coaches are) not yelling about the plays, messing up the plays or getting to the right depth," Peterson said. "Now, in everybody's minds, if you make a mistake, they know that you know what you're supposed to do. I feel like we have better chemistry with stuff like that. They know what we're capable of now. So it's just line up and play fast."

FOOTBALL



Elon University senior wide receiver Aaron Mellette (3) is one of the highest-rated wide receivers in the National Football League Draft Class of 2013. Other sources have Mellette as one of the best small school prospects for next April's draft. FILE PHOTO

Sunday dreams for No. 3

NFL prospects high for Mellette

Fulfilling a lifelong goal

Zachary Horner
Sports Editor



FILE PHOTO BY AL DRAGO

Mellette was mentioned in a tweet by ESPN draft analyst Mel Kiper, Jr., as one of Kiper's top non-FBS prospects.



FILE PHOTO BY AL DRAGO

Mellette is looking to become the first Elon player to be selected in the NFL Draft since Chad Nkang in 2007.

The year 2012 for Elon University senior wide receiver Aaron Mellette started with the influence of a draft pick by the National Football League's St. Louis Rams.

The Rams selected Appalachian State University wide receiver Brian Quick with the first pick of the second round, No. 33 overall. Quick was a senior whom Mellette had out-duelled in the pair's two match-ups in 2010 and 2011.

"A lot of people hit me up, former teammates, friends, like, 'Aaron, did you see that? Quick's gone,'" Mellette said the day after Quick was drafted. "I was like, 'Yeah man.' And they were like, 'Man, you should have left early.' I was like, 'No, I'm good.'"

The hype fest

Mellette decided to stay for 2011 and has set himself up nicely for a shot at the NFL, at least according to the scouts. Dane Brugler, an NFLDraftScout.com senior analyst, listed Mellette as his top small school prospect for the 2013 draft. NFLDraftBible.com has the senior wideout as its No. 43 prospect overall. NFLMocks.com writer Mackenzie Pantoja called him a "small school Chad Ochocinco," comparing Mellette to the wide receiver who made several Pro Bowls for the Cincinnati Bengals.

All of that followed a career year of 1,639 receiving yards and 12 touchdowns, top numbers in the Southern Conference, for a 5-6 Elon team.

Despite the attention he has received, he said there have not really been any distractions.

"Every day you get kind of more accustomed to it," he said. "The biggest distraction is more of the outside people calling you or sending you messages trying to reach you, people you've never spoke to ever. That's where the distractions come from."

Mellette said being a professional was a goal of his from day one, either in basketball, a sport he played in high school, or football. It is well-documented that he did not play organized football until his sophomore year of high school. He also sees the benefits it will bring to

his team and his town.

"It means a lot," he said. "I know it helps Elon a lot. We're getting noticed more on the map, not just a school that nobody's going to know about in the future possibly. And it does a lot for me, for my city of Sanford. All the great athletes that came out of there that I used to read about in the newspaper, none of them really got a chance to play at the professional level such as the NBA and the NFL. And knowing that I could be the first guy to do that ever means a lot to me. This is bigger than me, this is for my city. Sanford's going to be on the map. It's going to be cool, because if I make it, we all make it, that's how I look at it."

To the small city of Sanford, about an hour and fifteen minutes from Elon's campus, it would be an awesome thing, said Mellette's former high school assistant basketball coach, Gaston Collins.

"It would do wonders for this town and this great city of Sanford," said Collins, who is now the head boys' basketball coach at Southern Lee High School, where Mellette graduated in 2008. "We all support each other, and he has a lot of fans — not only the Southern Lee family, but he has his church family, his extended family, also the people over at Lee County High School, the other high school in our county, they're all very supportive. If he were to have that opportunity, that would just be very awesome."

An influential tweet

One big endorsement Mellette received came in April soon after the draft, when ESPN draft analyst Mel Kiper, Jr., tweeted, "Two non Div 1-A prospects I will be watching very closely this season are Elon WR Aaron Mellette & Missouri Southern DT Brandon Williams." He later tweeted, "Mellette could be this year's Brian Quick, provided he has another eye catching season & does well at the all-star games & Combine."

Yes, Mellette saw the tweet.

"I was like, 'Aw, shoot, Mel Kiper tweeted about me. I see this dude on ESPN all through the offseason,'" he said. "So that was pretty cool. I remember a lot of people retweeted it that day. One of my coaches asked me if I saw it. I even retweeted it myself, then everybody from Sanford seemed like

they were retweeting it, like, 'Merle Nation, yeah!' It was pretty funny." Merle is Aaron's nickname.

The NFL hype hasn't been a distraction to Mellette, but his teammates notice the scouts.

"We see them every day at practice, out there walking around with the logos on and everything," said senior quarterback Thomas Wilson. "He's out there working hard, I'm excited for him. Panthers, Jaguars, Eagles. It gets everybody excited."

Mellette said his teammates like to rag him about it.

"They do sometimes," he said. "Like, 'Oh it's Merle, he don't gotta do nothing, he's going to the NFL.' It's funny. We're just talking junk. It's all fun and games, nothing serious out of it."

Staying focused on what lies ahead this season

Despite the attention No. 3 is getting, Elon head football coach Jason Swepson is quick to remind the team that this season is not about the performance of an individual player.

"This is about Elon," he said. "But we want him to be successful, because if he's successful, we're all successful. So I think the team was excited when I said that, that it's not about Aaron, it's about the team, but let's make sure we let him do his thing."

Doing his thing may mean helping the Phoenix to a SoCon championship and a berth in the Football Championship Subdivision playoffs, something Mellette said he wants.

"I want to win a conference championship. I've never won a ring at all," he said. "I would love to win one. It would be great to win one, something that would always stick with me. At the end of the day, if I don't win the conference championship, and I've got eight wins, nine wins, I'm going to the playoffs, and I get to compete for the national championship. I get to go against some of the other best teams across the country, which I want to do, see other defenses, who else is out there, and compete for that. And put another playoff sign up there, for the 2012 season."

There is no doubt a conference championship would come off the back of a solid season from Aaron Mellette. And perhaps a little more could come as well.

FOOTBALL

Wilson stepping out of Riddle's shadow

Zachary Horner
Sports Editor

Replacing a Hall-of-Fame quarterback is a difficult thing. Just ask new Indianapolis Colts signal-caller Andrew Luck, who has the unenviable task of taking over for NFL legend Peyton Manning.

Elon University senior quarterback Thomas Wilson had that responsibility placed on him in 2011. He had to find a way to play football at possibly the most crucial position in the game in the shadow of Elon Hall-of-Famer Scott Riddle, the program's all-time leading passer in completions (1,168), yards (13,264) and touchdowns (106), all by a mile.

And it weighed on him.

"I definitely felt him," Wilson said. "I don't want to say that I've ever tried to live up to be as good as Scott or be Scott Riddle. But I definitely felt that, with him graduating and me being the next guy to step up, I guess you could see how I kind of stepped into his shadow."

Wilson came to Elon in 2008 in the midst of Riddle's run as a four-year starter at quarterback and was his backup in 2010. When Riddle graduated, it was time for Wilson to step up.

"I don't want to sit here and try and compare myself to Scott or anyone else in the past, or anyone here in the present," Wilson said last August. "I'm just trying to get in there and manage the game and do what a quarterback has to do to win football games."

Wilson did a lot in his first year. He led the Southern Conference and ranked 13th in the nation with 3,057 passing yards, becoming just the second QB at Elon to eclipse the 3,000-yard passing mark (guess who was the first). His 23 touchdowns tied for the third-highest total in Elon history.

But there were some struggles.

"I think if you look at the history of the game and anyone that followed a Hall-of-Fame, retired jersey quarterback, (they) didn't have success," Elon head football coach Jason Swepson said. "I can't imagine the pressure that he went through a year ago."

Wilson had the second-most interceptions (21) in the Football Championship Subdivision, one behind sophomore Brady Attaway at Stephen F. Austin University. And dealing with turnovers is something he said he learned a lot about.

"As an offense, you're not going to win football games turning the ball over," he said. "Turnovers has been a huge thing that we've been working on throughout the spring and over the summer, and now into preseason camp — decreasing the amount of turnovers, protecting the ball, interceptions, fumbles, things of that nature. And we've definitely cut back on those, so that's been a huge step for us, with the turnover margin."

Swepson sympathetically expects a change, as well as an explanation for some of those turnovers.

"Hopefully, the ball bounces our way," he said. "After watching the cut-ups from a year ago, there were about

10 of those interceptions that were batted balls that bounced a funny way. If Lady Luck can be on our side this year and we can cut those numbers into single digits, then we're going to be able to win a lot more football games."

There were a few Wilson interceptions where the ball took a bounce off a receiver's hands or a defensive player made a magnificent play. But with a grasp of Swepson and offensive coordinator Chris Pincince's offensive system, he hopes to change things around from that high number of picks.

"It wasn't something that I wanted to accomplish last year," Wilson said. "It wasn't good and it probably was one of the main reasons we were 5-6 and had a losing record. (It's) one of the things I've worked on and taken responsibility for in the offseason. We've cut down on the turnovers throughout the spring, throughout practice, throughout training camp. It's been a good process for me. The whole learning process has been good, and hopefully we can cut down on turnovers, fumbles and interceptions, throughout the whole season."

A preseason all-SoCon second-team selection, Wilson hopes to have a winning record and be playing for a SoCon championship at the end of the season. He points to the first few games of the conference season as a place to get a hot start: at 2011 conference champion and FCS semifinalist Georgia Southern University Sept. 22 and powerhouses Wofford College at home Sept. 29. Plus, a big rematch

with Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C., Oct. 6.

"Playing them early is going to be a test for us, but I think we'll be ready for it," he said. "If we can take care of business early on in the season, hopefully we can finish strong and be contending for a SoCon championship at the end."

Personally, Wilson wants that first team all-SoCon selection.

"I'm definitely humbled and honored to be named second team SoCon, but definitely want to get my name up there on the first team after this year. That's one of my personal goals and, if I'm up there as a first team SoCon quarterback, it will only help us as a team get better."

And now he believes he's out of the Scott Riddle shadow.

"After our first game in Vanderbilt (Sept. 3, 2011), I felt more comfortable about everything and wasn't worried as much about trying to fill the shoes of Scott or trying to be in his shadow," he said.

And Swepson sees the same thing.

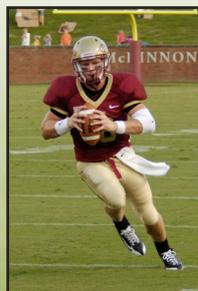
"I think that burden is off his shoulders, and I think he's being himself and is the true leader of this program," he said. "I think this year is a different situation. I don't think he has that pressure anymore."



THOMAS WILSON

Scott Riddle

freshman-2007



HEAD TO HEAD

First year as starting quarterback

Thomas Wilson

junior-2011



11	Games Played	11
346	Completions	279
508	Attempts	411
68.1	Completion %	67.9
3,817	Yards	3,057
31	Touchdowns	23
13	Interceptions	21
7	Wins	5

FOOTBALL

2012 Schedule

Compiled by Zachary Horner
Sports Editor

Home: ● Away: ●

Sept. 1 @ UNC-Chapel Hill



- **All-Time Elon Record vs. Tar Heels:** 0-0-0
- **Key Player for UNC:** Sophomore RB Giovanni Bernard (1,324 rushing yards, 13 rushing touchdowns in 2011)
- **Debut:** The first meeting between the Phoenix and the Tar Heels will be the first game for new UNC head coach Larry Fedora, who previously coached at Southern Mississippi University.

Sept. 8 vs. North Carolina Central



- **All-Time Elon Record vs. Eagles:** 8-3-0
- **Key Player for NCCU:** RS-Junior WR/KR Geovonie Irvine (580 receiving yards, five receiving touchdowns in 2011)
- **Last Year:** The Phoenix scraped out a 23-22 win in Durham last season, needing a Thomas Wilson 27-yard touchdown pass to then-senior Christian Dennis with less than five minutes left in the fourth quarter to pull ahead.

Sept. 15 vs. West Virginia State



- **All-Time Record vs. Yellow Jackets:** 1-0-0
- **Key Player for WVSU:** Senior QB Ricky Phillips (leading passer, second-leading rusher in 2011)
- **It's Been a While:** Elon defeated West Virginia State 60-13 Sept. 11, 1993 in the team's only prior meeting. That season, Robert Burnett tied for third in the most interceptions for an Elon player with eight.

Sept. 22 @ Georgia Southern



- **All-Time Record vs. Eagles:** 3-9-0
- **Key Player for GSU:** Senior DT Brent Russell (2011 SoCon Defensive Player of the Year)
- **FCS Powerhouse:** The Eagles were ranked fourth in the country to start 2012 in The Sports Network/Fathead.com FCS top-25 College Football Poll, the best ranking of all teams in the SoCon after finishing 11-3 last year and making the semifinals of the FCS playoffs.

Sept. 29 vs. Wofford



- **All-Time Record vs. Terriers:** 11-24-0
- **Key Player for Wofford:** Senior FB Eric Breitenstein (1,474 rushing yards in 2011, the third-highest single-season total in Wofford history)
- **Top Runner:** Breitenstein is the active FCS leader in rushing yards and touchdowns. He had 28 carries for 217 yards and four touchdowns in a 48-28 Wofford win over the Phoenix last season.

Oct. 6 @ Appalachian State



- **All-Time Record vs. Mountaineers:** 9-30-1
- **Key Player for Appalachian State:** Senior LB Jeremy Kimbrough (105 tackles, four sacks, second team All-American in 2011)
- **Looking for a First:** The Phoenix has not defeated Appalachian State since entering the SoCon in 2003, but have lost by four and three points the last two years, respectively, to the Mountaineers.

Oct. 20 vs. Western Carolina



- **All-Time Record vs. Catamounts:** 23-16-2
- **Key Player for Western Carolina:** Senior LB Rock Williams (third in the SoCon in tackles in 2011)
- **A Familiar Face:** Western Carolina head coach Mark Speir spent three seasons on the Elon football coach staff under former head coach Al Seagraves as an assistant coach and recruiting director.

Oct. 27 vs. Furman



- **All-Time Record vs. Paladins:** 5-10-0
- **Key Player for Furman:** Senior TE Colin Anderson (17.4 yards per catch and seven touchdown receptions led all FCS tight ends in 2011)
- **Upset:** Last season on Nov. 12, Elon then-senior linebacker Joshua Jones intercepted Furman quarterback Chris Forcier's pass and returned it 40 yards for a touchdown to seal a 41-34 win over the then-No. 17 ranked Paladins.

Nov. 3 @ The Citadel



- **All-Time Record vs. Bulldogs:** 5-6-0
- **Key Player for The Citadel:** Junior FB Darien Robinson (862 rushing yards and nine touchdowns in 2011)
- **By a Slim Margin:** The bulldogs lost five games by 10 points or fewer in 2011, including a narrow 18-15 loss to Elon Sept. 24. Citadel kicker Ryan Sellers missed a 37-yard field goal in overtime, making Elon then-junior kicker Adam Shreiner's 33-yarder the winning score.

Nov. 10 vs. Samford



- **All-Time Record vs. Bulldogs:** 7-3-0
- **Key Player for Samford:** Junior RB Fabian Truss (177.4 all-purpose yards per game led SoCon in 2011)
- **Legend at the Helm:** Samford head coach Pat Sullivan won the 1971 Heisman Trophy as a quarterback at Auburn University and is a member of the College Football Hall of Fame. He played five seasons in the NFL.

Nov. 17 @ UT-Chattanooga



- **All-Time Record vs. Mocs:** 6-3-0
- **Key Player for UT-Chattanooga:** RS-Sophomore QB Terrell Robinson (named SoCon Freshman of the Year in 2011 by media)
- **On the Links:** Mocs' senior golfer Steven Fox won the U.S. Amateur at Cherry Hills Golf Club on the first extra hole Aug. 19 over University of California redshirt junior Michael Weaver.



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MEN'S SOCCER

Senior scorers keep eyes on proverbial prize

Zachary Horner
Sports Editor

Senior forward Chris Thomas and midfielder Gabe Latigue led the Elon University Phoenix men's soccer team in scoring last season, Thomas in goals and Latigue in assists. They were also both named to the preseason all-Southern Conference team.

But all they care about is what happened at the end of the 2011 season, an appearance in the NCAA Tournament, the first in Elon men's soccer history.

"At the end of the year, we were doing all the things right, listening to our coaches, playing hard," Thomas said. "Hopefully, we can begin that at the beginning of the season, instead of so late. And possibly, get an at-large bid."

Thomas was named the conference player of the week twice last season and scored three game-winning goals, against Campbell University, Clemson University and Furman University. He took the selection with stride, focusing more on his team. "It's a great accomplishment, I'm glad that I was selected," he said. "I'd much rather us be (ranked higher). I feel like we're disrespected in this league, I'd rather be first or second."

The same poll put Elon as the fourth-best team in the SoCon, something Latigue noticed as well.

"Obviously, it was pretty disappointing to see the ranking," he said. "We didn't necessarily have the strongest regular season last year. And I think that's what we realized going into the playoffs, that we really needed to pick it up, that we weren't where we were supposed to be. So that's what we did during the playoffs and we were able to win the championship."

That focus on team is carried by head coach Darren Powell.

"We look at those guys," he said. "They've worked hard and now they're seniors and they're going to graduate this December, which I think is massive. But as far as preseason selections, it's preseason. I tell the guys all the time, it's doesn't matter where you're written down at the start of the season, it's where you're at the end of the season. Those guys need to concentrate on the game and getting better and improving for the program."

Latigue echoes his coach's sentiment.

"Preseason doesn't necessarily describe where the end of the season's going to go," he said. "Obviously, it's a good honor, but at the same time, I take it and that's that, and keep steady, looking forward and ready to play come regular season."

For the Phoenix to repeat as SoCon champions, Latigue and Thomas will need to keep on scoring and keep on setting an example, because their futures are at stake.



Senior midfielder Gabe Latigue (7) and senior forward Chris Thomas are focused more on another championship than individual honors. FILE PHOTO BY AL DRAGO

"They've got aspirations to play after college, so they need to make sure they continue to work at the game, put themselves in a good position to continue their playing career after this season," Powell

said.

But for now, the focus is on four letters, and reaching that goal this season. When asked about his expectations for the year, Thomas didn't hesitate.

"Hopefully we'll be able to get a good enough record to get in the NCAAs without winning the (SoCon) tournament," he said. "And the tournament will be a bonus."

Championship repeat attempt fueled by lack of recognition

Zachary Horner
Sports Editor

Yes, the Elon University men's soccer team won the Southern Conference championship last season, upsetting the No. 3 seed Georgia Southern University, No. 2 seed Furman University and No. 1 seed University of North Carolina at Greensboro in consecutive games as the No. 6 seed in the 2011 tournament.

Despite that, and returning their top three scorers, the Phoenix finds itself selected as the fourth-best team in the conference to start the season.

But head coach Darren Powell is pleased with the first-place vote his team received.

"I'm very excited that someone would think we're the top team," he said with a smile. "I was kind of surprised we got first-place votes, so that's something to be proud of, I guess."

A couple of his players think otherwise.

"Yes, a lot," said senior forward

Chris Thomas when asked if he felt slighted by his team's ranking. "It's alright because I know our team is better than that. Hopefully, we'll be turning a lot of heads this year."

Thomas, who led the Phoenix in goals last season with ten goals, and fellow senior and midfielder Gabe Latigue, are looking to lead Elon back to the promised land of the NCAA Tournament, a tournament the team made last year for the first time in program history. Elon lost to Coastal Carolina University 4-3 in the first round.

"To create history the first year meant so much, and if we could repeat it again for my senior year, it would be unbelievable," Latigue said.

To do that, Elon will need to have a better regular season than it did in 2011, with a 6-10-2 record. A better regular season record, Powell said, will allow for an easier path back to the tournament. He made an example of Furman University, which finished the regular season ranked No. 16 in the country and, despite losing to

the Phoenix in the semifinals of the SoCon Tournament, made the NCAA Tournament.

So what would success in the regular season mean, exactly?

"To put ourselves in the position to make the national tournament from our schedule, without having to rely on the conference tournament to get the automatic bid," Powell said. "This team's going to be capable of that, and it would be nice going into the conference tournament with a little more security like Furman was able to do last year, be a top-20 program all year, lose in the conference tournament but still make the national tournament."

The Phoenix will have to do that without key cogs like James Carroll, Nick Millington and Austen King, three key players on last year's team that have graduated. So leading scorers Thomas (ten goals, two assists), Latigue (four goals, seven assists) and junior midfielder Matt Wescoe (three goals, two assists) will have to take over not only the scoring, but the leadership.

Latigue points to the freshmen that

are coming in, especially midfielder Miguel Salazar, whom Latigue said "just controls everything for us."

Much like Carroll did from his midfielder position.

"You can never replace guys," Powell said. "James Carroll, Nick Millington, Austen King, fantastic individuals, fantastic players for the program. And all (of) that senior group was. You don't replace them, but you have a different look. That's the positives and the negatives of college soccer, it's constantly moving. So you can never get a settled team from year to year, but you're constantly moving yourselves with the program, with the team."

Despite the losses of personnel, the head coach is "very optimistic" with the roster he had in front of him.

"Like every year, I think this team can achieve many great things," Powell said. "We've been very fortunate the last couple years to keep moving the program forward, different stats and different standings, making the tournament and winning championships. I fully expect to continue to move the program

forward this year, and what I hope is that we would come out with the right focus. If that's the case in each game, we should be very exciting to see."

And as far as the preseason ranking, he thinks nothing of it.

"Preseason rankings, nobody really knows each other, so it's based on what you think could happen, like in most sports," he said. "I think a lot can happen. I don't feel slighted at all, because that's what they are, preseason rankings. You take them for what they're worth. We don't really focus on those. It's the table at the end of the year and the conference tournament, that's what we like to focus on."

It is the focus on the basics Latigue points to as the key to success for repeating last year's triumph.

"If everyone's working hard and on their toes and everyone's putting in the work, I think the road to repeating is right in front of us," he said. "If we can all get our chemistry down and play together well, and everyone working hard and everyone's doing what we're supposed to do, we can do that."

MEN'S SOCCER

British freshman makes a splash overseas for Elon

Brace excited about adjusting to American soccer

Zachary Horner
Sports Editor

Elon University freshman midfielder James Brace's accent makes it a little difficult to understand him, but the excitement is noticeable.

"I came over the first of August," he said. "And I'm just settling in, just getting ready to start the season. I've been training a lot and it's going really well so far. The football, er, soccer over here, is brilliant. So it's going well so far."

Brace comes to Elon in his first season after his club team, Sunderland AFC Youth Academy, said they would not bring him back after this season. A native of Hartlepool, England, he figured he would have to look around to continue his playing career.

"My coach sent my details out to a lot of American universities, and obviously, Elon showed some interest," he said. "I sent some DVDs and just information about myself. Chris came personally."

Elon assistant men's soccer coach Chris Little went to England to personally visit Brace, who turns 19 in November, and he was set to come to play for the Phoenix.

Elon men's soccer head coach Darren Powell is already impressed with the freshman's play this preseason.

"James has come with a good pedigree from England, good experience," he said. "He's come in and done well in practice and the games for a freshman. He needs to continue to improve and hopefully become a force to be recognized with the Elon program."

The freshman hopes to make an immediate impact on the pitch for the maroon and gold.

"I'd like to start a few games for the team," he said. "Hopefully, make the national tournament again, build on what (the team) did last year. Personally, (I'd) like to start as many games as possible, score some goals and get some good performances in."

In the team's first match against High Point University Aug. 25, Brace started and played most of the game. "It was a brilliant experience," he said.

"I didn't know what to expect. A lot of it was fantastic."

He had a couple of opportunities to score, especially in the second half, having a couple of open shots go wide. He was kicking himself afterwards, he said.

Brace said the sport is much different in the United States.

"In England, soccer is the main sport," he said. "Everybody loves it. Over here, it's just getting big. You can see it on ESPN now."

Brace said he was in London the week before the 2012 Olympic Games began and that the excitement was palpable.

"The buzz over there was fantastic," he said. "It was pretty cool."

The most drastic difference between America and England, he said, is the weather.

"It's just the heat playing over here," Brace said, laughing. "The tempo is the same, there's a lot of good players over here as well. It's just the heat, it's not usually how I operate."



JAMES BRACE

2012 Schedule

Home: ● Away: ●

Aug. 25 vs. High Point - 8 p.m. (L 2-4)

Sept. 1 vs. Campbell - 7 p.m.

Sept. 7 @ Lipscomb - 8:30 p.m.

Sept. 9 @ Belmont - 1 p.m.

Sept. 15 @ Coastal Carolina - 7 p.m.

Sept. 19 @ William & Mary - 7 p.m.

Sept. 22 vs. UNC-Charlotte - 7 p.m.

Sept. 25 vs. Radford - 7 p.m.

Sept. 28 @ Davidson - 7 p.m.

Oct. 2 @ West Virginia - 7 p.m.

Oct. 6 vs. Furman - 7 p.m.

Oct. 9 vs. Wofford - 7 p.m.

Oct. 12 @ Georgia Southern - 3 p.m.

Oct. 16 vs. College of Charleston - 7 p.m.

Oct. 20 @ Appalachian State - 7 p.m.

Oct. 23 vs. Wake Forest - 7 p.m.

Oct. 27 @ UNC-Greensboro - 7 p.m.

Oct. 30 vs. Duke - 7 p.m.

Nov. 3 @ Southern Conference Tournament (Location and Time TBA)

Nov. 8-10 @ Southern Conference Tournament in Cary, N.C. (Time TBA)

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VOLLEYBALL

Tough tournament play, setter uncertainty tests volleyball team

Hannah DelaCourt
Senior Reporter

The Elon University volleyball team started off its season last weekend with the Hilton RTP/NCCU Tournament in Durham, but fell to Hampton University, Bradley University and Liberty University.

With mainly tournaments for the next four weeks, the team will take on schools such as the University of Alabama, Duke University and Northeastern University. Head coach Mary Tendler said it is good for the team to play major conference teams early in the season.

"We need to play tough teams to prepare us for SoCon teams," she said. "It will challenge us. If we play well, we have an opportunity to win, but we definitely need to bring it."

Second-year captain and senior defensive specialist Ali Deatsch said the team this year is very talented and has a lot of depth, which will help this season.

She said she believes it will be the team's mental game that will make the difference for them playing such challenging teams.

"It's about taking pride in who we are as Elon volleyball, whether or not Alabama has heard of us or not," she said. "It's taking pride in who we are and going out there and doing our best no matter who's on the other side of the net."

With four freshmen additions, Tendler said this year will showcase a brand new team, and the tournament play will help it discover its strengths and weak-

nesses.

"With all the new comers, one of our long-term goals is to mesh as a team," Tendler said. "We have four new players, but the seniors we lost played major roles for two or three years, so we are going to be a whole new team, which is fun and exciting, so our opponents won't know what to expect."

With the loss of starting setter Megan McMahon after she graduated last year, Tendler has yet to name a new starter at that position. But the three games during each tournament can be used to try line-ups to test which players will make up the strongest team.

Two of the freshmen are setters and Tendler said she also hopes to have captain and junior right side hitter Cali Estes help set, but Estes is recovering from an ACL tear.

"She worked really hard in the spring and when she went home this summer, so I'm really proud of her for all the work she did and the shape she came back in," Tendler said. "She is in better shape than we thought she would be but we are still progressing slowly because we don't want any setbacks. It's not easy going through what she went through."

Tendler is also running freshmen setters Chelsea Rafetto and Ana Nicksic through many hitting repetitions to allow them to practice the sets and understand where and to which hitters the

sets should be going.

Still, the setter is such an important position on the team, and Tendler said she knows it is going to take time and many repetitions for them to really get in

sync with the hitters.

"It's like a freshman quarterback coming in and starting, which doesn't happen often," Tendler said. "But they are both confident and working hard,

so we are just trying not to complicate things too much."

The first home game is 7 p.m. on Aug. 29 in Alumni Gym against North Carolina A&T.



FILE PHOTO BY JULIA MILLER

The Elon University volleyball team is hoping to use early season tournament play to prepare for the always rigorous Southern Conference schedule.

Student assistant coach seen as friend, leader by team

Hannah DelaCourt
Senior Reporter

Looking at Elon University volleyball, observers will see a wealth of volleyball experience among the coaching staff. Mary Tendler is in her ninth season as head coach. New assistant coach Jennifer Fry, prior to coaching at Elon, was the head coach at Norfolk State University and an assistant coach at Washington State University. Fellow assistant coach Tina Reading was a volunteer assistant coach at Elon when



WILL LLAMAS

the women won the Southern Conference North Division championship in 2010.

Joining them is student assistant coach Will Llamas, a junior marketing major from Connecticut who has been playing volleyball since high school and is in his third year as an assistant coach for the team. Llamas came to Elon thinking he would not have the opportunity to play competitive volleyball because Elon does not have a men's team, so he emailed Tendler with an idea.

"I contacted the coach to see if she would be interested in someone like me," he said. "She had to make sure I was able to keep up with these girls because they've been playing all their lives. She kind of threw me in the first day of practice, and I did pretty well and so they started respecting me and it's a mutual respect."

Respect is something Llamas said he knew he needed to earn right away if he

really wanted a chance to be a part of the team.

"All of these girls have been playing longer than me," he said. "But while they may know more than me, they can't see themselves play, so an extra set of eyes helps them get better."

He also said he sees himself as a kind of middleman between the coaches and players. While the coaches see him as a coach, he is still a college student. The players see him as both a friend and a coach.

Senior Carly Ledbetter has played with Llamas as an assistant coach for three of her four years in uniform.

"He's younger than me and the other seniors, but he is very professional," she said. "When he first came in we were all around the same age, so it was hard for him to step in and correct us, but we go to him for a lot of things like our passing and

hitting. We look to him as a very important leader on the team and as a coach. We are all friends but we are all serious about volleyball."

Llamas is not the first student assistant coach, but he has stayed with the team the longest. Now, going into his third year, he will take on the extra role of scouting other teams before games.

His other duties include running drills in practice and even playing positions during practice if players are injured. He also videotapes matches and edits the videos so the players and coaches can watch the games later.

Tendler has seen the impact Llamas has had on the team, and she said she hopes to continue having a student assistant coach even after he graduates.

"He's volunteering so he's not getting any money, but I think he enjoys the time with the team and traveling," she said. "He

is really just part of the team like anybody else. So when he leaves, we are definitely going to have to fill the void, but he will definitely be hard to replace."

Along with assistant coaching, Llamas is president of the men's club volleyball team and president of the club sports council. So while he came in thinking he would not be able to play much, he sometimes plays five hours a day. But he said he would not have it any other way and is very appreciative of the opportunity to work with the team.

"I just want to thank the coaches because they've really helped me get better as a player and a coach," said Llamas. "Every girl brings something different to the table. It's a fun team to be around, whether on the court or off. I'm excited for the season and I hope to see as many people at the home games because this team is something special."

VOLLEYBALL

Position changes follow loss of last year's seniors

Hannah DeLaCourt
Senior Reporter

The losses of setter Megan McMahon and outside hitter/middle blocker Caroline Lemke leave big holes in both Elon University women's volleyball's offense and defense. Although head women's volleyball coach Mary Tendler said she will miss their leadership and what they could do on the court for the team, she feels good about the players she has now.

"They are ready to take on bigger roles and get more playing time and help the team win," Tendler said. "As a coach, it's fun, we can find out strengths and put together a team."

But in order to figure out who will make up the best team, senior captain Ali Deatsch said it may take some experimenting.

"I think coach will be giving everyone a chance and seeing what flows so we can figure out what gives our team the best foot forward," she said.

Senior outside hitter/middle blocker Carly Ledbetter said experimenting means players may try new positions. And she said no one's spot is guaranteed.

"Before conference, you are looking to see who will fill a position," Ledbetter said. "While we are young, we are talented and have a lot of depth. Everyone is competing for a spot whether you have played that position before."

Sophomore Kris Harris and senior Alli Nogi, who played middle last year, have been getting experience as right side hitters, and right side junior captain Cali Estes will be setting a bit this season.

With the addition of the four freshmen, the team will look significantly different from last year.

"It's going to be really dif-



FILE PHOTO BY MERISSA BLITZ
The Elon volleyball team is looking to replace crucial players from last year.

icult for other teams to scout us because they haven't seen these players yet," Tendler said. "They don't know some of our other players so I'm looking forward to having a new look to our team."

Ledbetter also sees the new players on the team having a big role this season.

"We are so excited about the freshmen," she said. "We already have such a great team chemistry. It's always hard to have new people come in and blend the team but I think they are going to contribute a lot."

Helping the team mesh is one of the seniors' goals this year.

Deatsch said it was important to everyone that the best team is out on the court.

"We have talked a lot about communication and as seniors we have had some discussions among the five of us to make sure everyone feels welcome," she said. "That's something that is important to us. We are a team no matter who is on the court. We are a unit as opposed to individual players."

Still, players will have to earn their spot for positions and playing time this year as Tendler decides on the final line-up.

"We are making some decisions on where (players) are going to be best for our offense and defense," she said. "But they do have a lot of competition with the four freshmen that came in so everybody does have to earn their playing time."

2012 Schedule

Home: ● Away: ●

Aug. 24-25 @ Hilton RTP/NCCU Tournament (L 2-3, L 0-3, L 0-3)

Aug. 29 vs. North Carolina A&T - 7 p.m.

Aug. 31 vs. Gardner-Webb - 7 p.m.

Sept. 1 vs. North Carolina Central - 12:30 p.m.

Sept. 1 vs. Alabama - 7 p.m.

Sept. 4 @ Radford - 7 p.m.

Sept. 7-8 @ Duke Challenge

Sept. 11 vs. High Point - 7 p.m.

Sept. 14 -15 @ Colonial Challenge

Sept. 20 vs. UNC-Greensboro - 7 p.m.

Sept. 22 vs. College of Charleston - 7 p.m.

Sept. 28 @ Western Carolina - 7 p.m.

Sept. 29 @ Appalachian State - 7 p.m.

Oct. 5 vs. UT-Chattanooga - 6 p.m.

Oct. 6 vs. Samford - 7 p.m.

Oct. 12 @ Davidson - 7 p.m.

Oct. 14 @ Georgia Southern - 2 p.m.

Oct. 19 vs. Wofford - 7 p.m.

Oct. 20 vs. Furman - 7 p.m.

Oct. 26 vs. Appalachian State - 7 p.m.

Oct. 27 vs. Western Carolina - 7 p.m.

Nov. 2 @ Samford - 8 p.m.

Nov. 3 @ UT-Chattanooga - 6 p.m.

Nov. 8 @ UNC-Greensboro - 7 p.m.

Nov. 10 @ The Citadel - 2 p.m.

Nov. 17-19 in Davidson, N.C. (Opponent and Time TBA)

WOMEN'S SOCCER

Freshman Mel Insley comes to Elon on a winning streak

Andrew Wilson
Assistant Sports Editor

After playing for and winning the U-18 USYSA National Championship this summer with her club team, the FC Pennsylvania Strikers, freshman defender Mel Insley arrived at Elon University riding her very own wave of success.

"(Winning the championship) was amazing," Insley said. "I don't even think I can think of a word to describe it. We had so much fun. There was a lot of anticipation going in, so coming off the result we did was just like icing on top of the cake."

After considering a bunch of "random" schools to play college soccer, Insley said she selected Elon out of the crowd not only because of the

beauty of the school, but also the feeling of being home.

"I looked at Temple. I looked at South Carolina. I looked at Dartmouth, and I looked at American," Insley said. "But the second I stepped on campus here, it was gorgeous and that obviously helped. Then meeting the coaches and the team, I just felt at home and I felt like it was the perfect fit."

To go with the feeling of being at home, Insley said she also values the family atmosphere that not only the Elon community displays, but the team as well. It's something she said she's excited most about her time on the soccer team at Elon.

"I know that I'm being taken care of here, and I know that everyone is looking out for me," Insley said. "I love that aspect."

Now at Elon, Insley said she knows college soccer is different than high school. More demanding workouts and more responsibility are the advantages to playing college soccer.

"It's different, it's a lot different," Insley said. "The coaches expect more out of you. It's a lot more work, but I think the whole challenge aspect of pushing yourself to do better is a big part of it and I think that's a really good and really big part of playing in college."

Insley is one of seven freshmen coming in this season that head women's soccer coach Chris Neal expects to make an impact for the Phoenix.

"We project Mel to play as long as she can maintain her fitness and all that good stuff," he said.

Experience key as soccer kicks off 2012 campaign

Andrew Wilson
Assistant Sports Editor

The 2012 version of the Elon University women's soccer team brings something into the season the program has yet to see under head coach Chris Neal. With 10 starters and 18 players total returning to the maroon and gold this season, experience will not be a problem for the Phoenix this year.

"To win, you have to have talent and you have to have experience," Neal said. "I think it just has to be a combination of the two to win, and this is the first year I've been here that we've had this amount of experience on the field."

Of those starters, Elon returns its leading scorer from last year in junior forward Cather-

ine Brinkman, senior midfielder Jaclyn Wood, as well as 2012 preseason all-conference sophomore goalkeeper, Kate Murphy.

After finishing tied for fifth last season in the Southern Conference, and being pre-ranked sixth this season, Elon's experience mixed with the fresh faces that come in the form of seven incoming freshmen will have some work to do before reaching their goal of a conference championship.

"If the girls want to take (the pre-rank) as an insult, then sure let's go for it and use it, but it is what it is," Neal said. "We'll be upset if we don't win a conference championship. Anything less than that is equal disappointment."

Of those seven incoming freshmen, Neal projects them

to make an immediate impact thanks not to only their talent, but also pre-existing injuries to other players that will force the rookies into action early.

"You're going to see freshmen on the field immediately," Neal said. "We have a lot of injuries to returning players, so it's nice to have a freshmen class that can fire right in and doesn't skip a beat."

The Phoenix has three "power six" conference opponents on its schedule this year in Big East opponent University of Cincinnati, national runner-up from a season ago in Duke, and North Carolina State, both from the ACC.

Elon fought Cincinnati to a 1-1 draw on opening night at Rudd Field Friday, Aug. 17 before traveling to Durham to take on second-ranked Duke



Elon freshman defender Mel Insley comes to Elon on the heels of a championship summer with her club team.

AL DRAGO | Staff Photographer

University. The Phoenix suffered an 8-0 loss at the hands of the Blue Devils, but Neal said the team took the loss as a "learning experience," for the rest of the season. Elon will take on N.C. State in Raleigh on Sept. 2.

Looking to improve on their six conference wins from a year ago, Elon opens its conference schedule Sept. 21 on the road against Western Carolina University, before the conference home opener two days later against Appalachian State Uni-

versity.

With 11 conference games, the Phoenix round out the regular season at home on Oct. 24 against the University of North Carolina at Greensboro before the SoCon Tournament in Birmingham, Ala.

WOMEN'S SOCCER

MEET THE HEAD COACH: Chris Neal

Andrew Wilson
Assistant Sports Editor

The 2012 campaign for the Phoenix women's soccer team marks the fifth season at the helm for head coach Chris Neal.



CHRIS NEAL

Neal came to Elon after serving as an assistant coach at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. As a 1995 graduate of UNC-Wilmington, Neal's first coaching job came when he was hired as an assistant men's soccer coach at Augusta State. While coaching, Neal earned his masters of education degree in education administration and supervision at Augusta State.

The next stop for Neal was when he was hired as the head coach of the men's soccer team at Pfeiffer University in 1998. Over his three-year stint with

the Falcons, Neal led them to their first NCAA Division II ranking in program history.

After leaving Pfeiffer, Neal switched to the women's side as an assistant coach at his alma matter, UNC-Wilmington. He spent seven seasons with the Seahawks before coming to Elon prior to the 2008 season.

Elon named Neal the head coach of the women's soccer team on Jan. 2, 2008. In his first season, Neal took the Phoenix from a 5-12-2 record to an 8-8-3 mark. The record marked the first time Elon had been at or above .500 since the 1999 season. Also during the 2008 season, Elon beat Atlantic Coast Conference opponent Maryland by a final of 1-0. It was the first time Elon had topped an ACC opponent in program history.

Prior to last season, the overall team record in a season increased with each year that passed with Neal as head coach. Since his arrival at Elon, the team's Ratings Percentage Index (RPI) has increased more than 100 spots

nationally, finishing last year ranked 138 out of 322 teams.

In 2010, Neal coached the Phoenix to a second straight 12-win season and a birth in the Southern Conference tournament. Both were firsts for the program since moving to Division I in 1999. Elon shut out College of Charleston on the road in the first round of the tournament, 1-0. Ever since the appearance in 2010, Elon has been a mainstay in the Southern Conference tournament, making the field in each successive season.

Of last year's conference wins, Neal led the Phoenix to a win over in-state rival University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Before the win, the Phoenix was winless in 16 previous matches against the Spartans.

Two out of the four years of Neal's tenure, the Phoenix has been awarded the NSCAA Team Academic award, which is given when a team carries a combined 3.0 GPA or higher throughout the year. Elon took home the honors in both the 2008-2009 and 2010-2011 academic years.

2012 Schedule

Home: ● Away: ●

Aug. 17 vs. Cincinnati - 7 p.m.

Aug. 19 vs. Duke - 6 p.m.

Aug. 24 @ Virginia Military Institute - 5 p.m.

Aug. 30 vs. Coastal Carolina - 7 p.m.

Sept. 2 @ N.C. State - 3 p.m.

Sept. 7 @ Troy - 5 p.m.

Sept. 9 @ Campbell - 2:30 p.m.

Sept. 14 @ High Point - 7 p.m.

Sept. 16 vs. Francis Marion - 2 p.m.

Sept. 21 @ Western Carolina - 7 p.m.

Sept. 23 vs. Appalachian State - 2 p.m.

Sept. 28 vs. The Citadel - 7 p.m.

Sept. 30 vs. College of Charleston - 2 p.m.

Oct. 5 @ Wofford - 6 p.m.

Oct. 7 @ Furman - 2 p.m.

Oct. 12 vs. Georgia Southern - 7 p.m.

Oct. 14 vs. Davidson - 2 p.m.

Oct. 19 @ UT-Chattanooga - 7 p.m.

Oct. 21 @ Samford - 3 p.m.

Oct. 24 vs. UNC-Greensboro - 7 p.m.

Oct. 28 @ Southern Conference Tournament (Time and Location TBA)

Nov. 2-4 @ Southern Conference Tournament (Time and Location TBA)

Where he's been...



Year	School	Record
1996-1997	Augusta State University, Men's soccer assistant coach	21-14
1998-2000	Pfeiffer University, Men's soccer head coach	36-22-4
2001-2007	UNC-Wilmington, Women's assistant soccer coach	70-55-8
2008-2011	Elon University, Women's soccer head coach	23-17-4

CROSS COUNTRY

Vargas looks to capitalize on strong freshman campaign

Zachary Horner
Sports Editor

Elon University sophomore cross country runner Luis Vargas had a heck of a freshman season.

A native of Angier, N.C., he set a school record at the 2011 Southern Conference Championships with an 8K time of 24:49.07, finishing 10th overall with the best finish for an Elon men's runner in program history. He was named to both the all-conference second team and the SoCon all-freshman team.

If he was honest, it surprised him.

"It still hasn't hit me yet, I guess you

could say," he said. "But the team has been supporting me the whole way, and it's just been such an honor to be able to be that guy that pushes people to become better. Coming into the season last year, ever since the time trial, I've been improving."

Many of Vargas' teammates point to him as the guy who stands out among the rest.

"Luis, he's always way out there," said junior Ari Rothschild. "He loves going fast. It's just something he loves to do — basic runs, workouts, he's always out there."

Redshirt sophomore Sean Magee said Vargas reminds him of an animal.

"We all new he was fast, but already,

we've seen two workouts and he's just like a gazelle out there," he said.

Coach Christine Engel points to Vargas as one of the key returners on a men's team that SoCon coaches voted Aug. 22 to finish seventh in the conference out of 11 teams.

Not if Vargas has a say about it. He said he has set himself some high goals and has worked out intensely over the summer in order to reach those.

"My head's right in the game," he said. "I've had one year of experience under my belt and I know what to expect. I know the expectations I have for me, and I know what I need to do to get to that higher level."

Vargas said he hopes to reach

first-team all-conference honors by finishing in the top seven at the 2012 SoCon Championships, taking place Oct. 27 in Charleston, S.C. But he also has the team in mind.

"As a team, I want to work together more, just communicate more," he said. "Last year, we were a team, but this year we need to be more motivated, we need to really keep each other on track on simple things. If someone is doing something wrong, we need to be able to communicate that and not be shy, work together more."

And it's those simple things he hopes to improve on to push him to those heights — the healthy eating, hitting his goal mileage every week and

getting enough rest.

Vargas says he is a very motivated athlete, seeing mental strength as the key to be a successful runner.

"When you're out there running, you've definitely got to have something that will motivate you mentally, because that's 90 percent of our sport, mental," he said. "If you don't believe you can, you won't. For me, my family and my girlfriend, they're my motivation. You have to have motivation to be able to be a good cross country runner for sure."

With teammates pushing him and a reason to run, Vargas looks to capitulate the Elon men's cross country team past expectations, and improve himself in the process.

Cross country balances team, individual goals as new season begins

Zachary Horner
Sports Editor

Cross country is one a rare collegiate sport, along with golf and wrestling, because it is both individual and team-based.

Couple that with having both men's and women's sides, and cross country turns out to be what Elon University men's cross country redshirt sophomore Sean Magee calls "weird."

"Your race is really individual, you don't have to pest anybody or do anything like that," he said. "It's weird how you are really dependent on your team, because even if you finish first, you need five people to finish, or else you're disqualified. And then also, when you're training or in races, you're working with your teammates, you see them out there. It's like a tangible difference."

Senior women's runner Christine Pacewicz talks about how setting goals as an individual is key to having a good team performance.

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The Elon cross country team is coming off a season where the women were on the brink of a championship, while the men have been steadily improving.

The women finished third in the Southern Conference Championship last year, but senior Emily Tryon has a guarantee for this year.

"Our big goal, we're going to win conference, we've decided," she said.

The SoCon coaches agree, voting the Phoenix as the best women's team in the conference.

"We returned three out of our top four from last year, who all had phenomenal seasons," said Elon head coach Christine Engel. "But we also have probably our strongest recruiting class we've ever had, so we're really excited about the five girls we've added to the roster as well."

Pacewicz and Tryon partner with junior Allyson Oram to lead the Phoenix women this season. Oram finished ninth at the conference meet last season while setting a school record.

Despite spectacular individual performances, Tryon said the team is focusing more on being a team as the key to beating top conference rivals.

"In practice, we really want to work off of each other, have good workout with each other," she said. "In the races, we want to make sure that our gaps are closed between runners, so we're finishing close together but we're also finishing far up, in front of conference rivals. We want to put a lot of girls in front of the top runners from other conferences."

For the men, sophomore Luis Vargas leads what Engel calls a "strong contingent of returners" that includes breakout sophomore Ari Rothschild and previously injured runners Magee and junior Ben Perron. Vargas finished tenth at last year's SoCon championships in a school record time, but the team wants more.

"We're looking at, assuming everybody gets healthy, but either way, trying to win the SoCon championship," Rothschild said. "That's one of our huge goals and it's a big one, and it's not going to be easy, but we're working hard towards that."

The Phoenix men finished sixth in last year's SoCon championship meet and were picked to finish seventh by the coaches this season. Rothschild was a bit



FILE PHOTO BY JULIA MILLER

The Elon women's cross country team was voted as the best team in the Southern Conference by the league's coaches.

of a late bloomer in 2011, posting a career best and Elon ninth-best time at the SoCon championships. Behind Rothschild and Vargas, the men hope improve. "Last year, we didn't really get where we wanted, but each year, especially since Coach Engel has come here, we've just improved," said junior Jimmy Stevenson. "We've gotten better and better and better. So I think, if our team's healthy and we're doing those little things and we're making progress throughout the season, then we can achieve that goal."

It all comes down to that SoCon championship meet, which takes place

Oct. 27 in Charleston, S.C. Engel said a focus on the little things is important to winning that meet.

"I think it's a really good combination of having the right team chemistry, having the girls or the guys really feed off each other and have a healthy competitiveness within each other every day at practice, and that they do the right things outside of practice, that they live a good lifestyle, get enough rest, eat properly, keep shenanigans at a minimum," she said.

Rothschild echoed the importance of the little things, crediting a focus on them for the improvement he saw at the end of

2011.

"The more I did it, I guess the better I got," he said. "Just training, making sure you're doing everything. Those little things really do matter, and sometimes people gloss over those, but that's what really gives you an extra edge on the competition."

Engel also said a little bit of fortune would not hurt either.

"It's that and obviously keeping people healthy and minimizing sickness and injury and all that," she said. "Definitely a combination of hard work, discipline, team chemistry, maybe a smidge of luck."

CROSS COUNTRY

How to be a great cross country runner in the words of the athletes

Compiled by Zachary Horner
Sports Editor

Editor's Note: The Pendulum asked several cross country experts about their No. 1 piece of advice for any aspiring cross country runner. Their responses indicate a wide variety of paths to take.

Christine Engel — head coach

Mental toughness and self-discipline. Being a distance runner, sometimes you're out there, for the girls maybe 13 mile runs by yourself, for the guys maybe 15-16 mile runs. Over the summer, the majority of them are training by themselves, and it gets pretty lonely. Having that fortitude to keep training and be disciplined every day. Taking care of your body

and all those things.

Ari Rothschild — sophomore men's runner

It's a simple sport — the more you put into it, the more you get out of it. Doing the little things, working hard, listening to coach, listening to your teammates, keeping your teammates accountable as well as keeping yourself accountable, making sure you do all the right things, do your mileage. Making sure you're doing everything you can to make yourself better each day, and each day is an opportunity to get better.

Sean Magee — redshirt sophomore men's runner

You need to be good at not getting bored. You need to be able to either go for a run or sit on a bike for an hour and just find ways to entertain yourself

while that's happening.

Ben Perron — junior men's runner

The one thing I would say that characterizes a great cross country athlete is dedication. It's ultimately one of the most, if not the most, key ingredient to success. It takes training on a day-to-day basis. It really requires a lifestyle devoted to success on the cross country course. It really is a lifestyle, persevering through the thousands and thousands of miles throughout the year, the workouts, the workout routines, the dieting, nutrition, just living the life of hopefully an accomplished athlete. To me, it requires a lot of dedication.

Luis Vargas — sophomore men's runner

When you're out there running, you've definitely got to have something that will motivate you mentally, because that's 90 percent of our sport: mental. If you don't believe you can, you won't.

Jimmy Stevenson — junior men's runner

One motivation you need to hold on to and never let go of is don't let past performances get you down and make you lose motivation. Because if you do that,

you're going to start thinking you can't do it. You always need to be positive and believe in yourself that you can accomplish those goals. The better you get, the more you surprise yourself. That's happened to me on numerous occasions, and you just keep going. Keep heart with the spot.

Emily Tryon — senior women's runner

Listen to your body. Push it when you need to, but if you're feeling like something is hurt or if you're too fatigued, you need to listen to that too. It's really important.

Christine Pacewicz — senior women's runner

Don't ever give up. It's hard. I started off as a volleyball player and a track athlete. I started running (cross country) my sophomore year of high school, and every year you just put in the mileage and you step it up and you never get up. It's going to be hard, and then one day it just stops being hard and it becomes really fun.

Allyson Oram — junior women's runner

Trust yourself to know that you're capable of anything you set yourself up for.



FILE PHOTO BY JULIA MILLER
Juniors Erin Macbeth (7) and Brennan McDavid are part of the Elon women's cross country team, which was selected to finish first in the Southern Conference this season by the league's coaches.

Care Giver Needed free room and board

My family is looking for a Care Giver who can live with us and help. I'm a divorced mom and my son, Kevin, is 15 with severe cognitive impairment. He is Autistic, communicates non-verbally and with sounds (no words). He is physically healthy and non-violent.

We need someone who can keep an eye on Kevin when I need to go out. I will feel more comfortable with a female, preferably a sophomore or junior.

I'm offering a large furnished bedroom and all household benefits. We live just off Highway 61 in northern Whitsett (6 miles, 12 minutes to Elon). We plan to spend our free time at Peacehaven Farm (www.peacehavenfarm.org). Ours is a non-smoking, organic and decent home.

Please contact Kerry Kafafian at
(734) 355-0991 or kerrykafafian@gmail.com

2012 Schedule

Home: ● Away: ●

Aug. 31 @ Wake Forest

Sept. 15 - Elon Invitational

Sept. 28 @ Charlotte Invitational -
Charlotte, N.C.

Oct. 12 @ Royal XC Challenge - Charlotte, N.C.

Oct. 13 @ NCAA Pre-National Meet -
Louisville, Ky.

Oct. 27 @ Southern Conference Championships - Charleston,
S.C.

Nov. 3 - N.C. State Three Stripe Invitational

Nov. 9 - NCAA Southeast Regional Championships -
Charlotte, N.C.



OLIVIA MACKEY
JUNIOR, MIDFIELDER



MILES WILLIAMS
JUNIOR, DEFENSIVE BACK



CHRISTINE PACEWICZ
SENIOR, CROSS COUNTRY



JEREMY PETERSON
SENIOR, WIDE RECEIVER



SEAN MAGEE
SOPHOMORE, CROSS COUNTRY



KIMMIE KRAUSS
JUNIOR, MIDFIELDER



DANIEL LOVITZ
JUNIOR, MIDFIELDER



KRIS HARRIS
SOPHOMORE, MIDDLE BACK



CARLY LEDBETTER
SENIOR, OUTSIDE HITTER



CHANDLER WRIHTENBERRY
JUNIOR, DEFENSIVE BACK



CELIA ROSE EDDY
SENIOR, MIDDLE BACK



NICK BUTTERLY
R-JUNIOR, DEFENDER

