2013 – A Season to Celebrate!

by coach Kyle McQuillan

It has been an amazing year for Liberty Lacrosse and I am very proud of what this team has accomplished. In the just three seasons we have an overall record of 28 wins and only 9 losses.

We have qualified for the SELC playoffs two years in a row and this past month won our first ever SELC Div II championship – going undefeated in Div II play.

To say that this program and more specifically, this team has done well would be an understatement. However, regardless of all their achievements, I am most proud of ‘how’ this team accomplished what they did.

At the beginning of the season I felt a strong conviction to bring Christ to the forefront of our program. Not because we had disregarded this in the past, but because we had not been as intentional about doing so. I felt that if we honored God in how we played the game and how we represented ourselves on the field, then He would bless our efforts and not necessarily with a winning program.

One small way of doing this was instituting a team verse, 1 Timothy 4:8. “For physical training is of some value, but Godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” This verse has been boldly placed in our locker room, the back of our helmets and even on our warm-up uniforms.

Our intent, our prayer has been that these words would be reflected in our actions both on and off the field. These men have represented themselves, our school, and their faith in an amazing way. That is what I will be most proud of when this season is all said and done.

My hope is that God continues to bless our efforts and provides us with an opportunity to represent Him through our play and conduct in Greenville next week. Of course a National Title would also be a great finish to a very memorable season!

SELC DIV II CHAMPIONS!!!

In what proved to be an exciting 2013 play-off series in Marietta, GA, Liberty earned a berth in the MCLA National Championship by winning their first ever SELC Div II title. Here’s how it played out:

Game 1: Liberty 21 – PBAU 17
Game 2: Liberty 10 – Emory 6
Game 3: Liberty 9 – SCAD 5

(See tournament highlights pg 2.)

The field of 16 teams is set to compete for the Division II MCLA National Championship in Greenville, SC May 13-18, 2013.

4th place Liberty has been matched against 13th place NDSU – a game that will be played May 13, 2013 at 10:30 am (Wenwood Field 4).

(See MCLA Nationals pg 5.)
Highlights from the SELC Championship Tournament
Marietta, GA – April 26-28

The trip to Marietta, GA to compete in the SELC championship tournament was a long one, but rewarding on many levels. Our first stop was a morale boosting, tummy satisfying time of fellowship and feasting at the home of Brandt’s parents. Mrs. G prepared all the food. While she has had four sons to feed over the years, clearly feeding 27 hungry men was a step up. Thanks for the hospitality!

We pulled the toughest draw possible for our first game going up against the regular-season champions of the SELC’s North West Region, Palm Beach Atlantic University (PBAU). It was an exciting, high-scoring, back and forth battle, a great game for the spectators. For those forced to track the team’s progress via Twitter feeds the game was too close for comfort and for those watching the webcast live feed or in the stands it was no easier on the heart. Coach McQuillan said “for the first time this season we met a team that matched our offensive prowess”. Joe Gargiulo paced Liberty with 7 goals while Kurt Tobias (5 goals, 4 assists) and Derek Haywood (4 goals, 3 assists) provided a balanced attack. In the end Liberty prevailed, with a score of 21-17, and a nod to round two against the Emory University Eagles.

In game two against Emory Joe Gargiulo had another stellar game netting six goals. He had a hat trick in the fourth quarter alone to break the game open, scoring the first three goals off assists from freshmen Ryan Miller (2 goals), Bryce Mrakovich (3 assists) and Derek Haywood (2 assists) before Kurt Tobias, Liberty’s all-time scoring leader, sealed the win with an unassisted goal. Goalie Ethan Kamholtz made 12 saves and senior Mike Zumpano had three steals to anchor the Flames’ defense. Faceoff specialist Charles Fianko led Liberty with nine ground ball pickups, winning a convincing 14 out of 19 face offs.

The championship title game was played against Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) Bees in a steady and sometimes heavy rain. Fianko sparked the attack by winning nearly all of his first-half face offs, and 11 of 18 for the game. "He absolutely went off today," McQuillan said. "He won the first five or six right in a row and helped us get out to an early lead. He was a catalyst for our victory!"

For the third game in three days, Joe Gargiulo stole the show offensively. The veteran forward netted a first-quarter hat trick and finished with four goals, bringing his tournament total to 17.

"I don't want to say he was the surprise of the tournament, but if we had an all-tournament MVP, it would definitely have been Joe," McQuillan said. "Normally, someone different comes up big in every game so it's not realistic for somebody to step up three days in a row. He led us in goals all three games and led us to an SELC tournament championship."

Joe Gargiulo ultimately won the award for tournament offensive MVP and was one of several Liberty representatives on the all-tournament team along with Flames freshmen forward Ryan Miller and midfielder Bryce Mrakovich, junior midfielder Derek Haywood, senior long stick middie, Mike Zumpano, defenders Nate Lowmaster and Travis Briggs, freshman faceoff specialist Charles Fianko, and sophomore goalie Ethan Kamholtz.
Awesome Accolades and Awards

*Editor, with excerpts from articles by Ted Allen/Staff Writer*

In the weeks since our last edition the Liberty Men’s Lacrosse team has not only played hard but also had several opportunities to celebrate their success to date this season. The day after returning from winning their first SELC championship the team came together for the Team Awards Banquet.

While the team as a whole had lots to celebrate the banquet was an opportunity to honor some key achievements based on individual performance throughout the season. Individual awards were presented as follows:

- **Rookie of the Year** – Ryan Miller; Offensive MVP – Kurt Tobias;
- **Defensive MVPs** – Ethan Kamholtz & Mike Zumpano; Team MVP – Bryce Mrakovich; Coach’s Award – Travis Briggs

In addition, goalie Ethan Kamholtz and attack Joe Gargiulo were acknowledged for their efforts and for their achievements during the SELC tournament. Ethan was named the defensive MVP while Joe was named the offensive MVP of the tournament.

On April 24, 2013 Liberty University hosted its second annual end-of-the-year Club Sports Banquet – an event that filled the dining room at the impressive Hancock Welcome Center. The venue and the crowd were a testament to the Club Sports program’s burgeoning success over the past years.

At the banquet coach Kyle McQuillan was distinguished with the Club Sports Coach of the Year, recognition for his role in leading Liberty to its first SELC tournament title and a MCLA Division II national tournament berth. Kirk Handy, senior director of campus recreation also recognized the hundreds of students who work behind the scenes to help facilitate the program’s operations.

**SELC ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

In April the SELC All-Conference and All-Tournament teams were announced and Liberty was well represented as follows:

**SELC All-Conference Members** *(based on season-long performance)*

- **Team 1**
  - Ethan Kamholtz – Goalie
  - Ryan Miller – Attack
  - Bryce Mrakovich – Midfield
  - Mike Zumpano – LSM
- **Team 2**
  - Kurt Tobias – Attack
  - Honorable Mentions
    - Joe Gargiulo – Attack
    - Derek Haywood – Midfield

**SELC All-Tournament Members** *(based on SELC Championship play)*

- Travis Briggs – Long Pole
- Derek Haywood – Middie
- Charles Fianko – Face Off Specialist
- Joe Gargiulo – Attack
- Ethan Kamholtz – Goalie
- Nathan Lowmaster – Long Pole
- Ryan Miller – Attack
- Bryce Mrakovich – Middie

**BREAKING NEWS:**

It has just been announced that Kurt Tobias has received national recognition being named the MCLA Div II Offensive Player of the Month for April! Kurt has been a consistent contributor to the Liberty offense. He had 14 points in 3 regular season games in April. One was against a Division 1 opponent (Richmond) and another was against ranked Elon.
Never, never, never quit.
One parent’s perspective on the years leading up to the Lacrosse Flame’s 2013 SELC Championship by Diane McQuillan

It has been close to ten years since Liberty University came onto my horizon quite unexpectedly. And while it has always been a distance from the institution and the “never quit” legacy of Dr. Jerry Falwell Sr. continues to play a predominant role in my life.

It was the fall of 2003 when our son, Kyle, first expressed an interest in attending Liberty University. I was caught completely off-guard. He had attended a recruitment symposium of Christian Universities with his church youth group and had come home intent on attending Liberty. I was puzzled. Of course I had heard of Dr. Falwell – the fundamentalist Southern Baptist, the televangelist, and the cofounder of the Moral Majority – but my son’s interest in a university more than 3,550 miles away left me bewildered. That was until my husband made the connection for me between the Christian Liberal Arts University and NCAA athletics.

Recognizing that his interest had been piqued by the sports programs we encouraged him to attend a College for a Weekend event. As a Mom I was fairly confident that a firsthand visit to the then not so luxurious, three-to-a-room, non-air conditioned dorms, and the infamous ‘Liberty Way’ might temper his enthusiasm. I was mistaken. His determination to attend Liberty remained relentless.

Doors continued to open and in the late summer of 2004 we travelled from northern Alberta to southern Virginia as a family to deposit him in what seemed like another world. I can admit today what I could not admit then. I was absolutely convinced that we would be back before Christmas to gather him up and bring him home. But we had comfort that God was at work and if he was to learn the lessons of independence and grow in his spiritual maturity then Liberty was a good place to be.

Football had been Kyle’s passion throughout his high school years and his speed and agility had kept him competitive in Canada. However after watching a Liberty football practice upon his arrival it was immediately evident that the US collegiate game was based on both speed AND size. His competitive football playing days had come to a close. Football had lured him to Liberty and it was no longer a viable dream. I started to think that the trip back to collect him could potentially before Thanksgiving!

But the call never came. Having played box lacrosse in Canada he gave field lacrosse a try and discovered a new passion. It was the perfect fit between academics and athletics and he pursued it with a new-found enthusiasm.

Life can bring storms, but God is faithful. On March 14, 2005 I received a call from a very distraught Kyle. He had clearly been involved in something tragic and I could barely make out what he was saying. In the hours that followed we pieced together the details of the accident that had befallen the student-run lacrosse team as they travelled to Louisiana for a spring break lacrosse tournament. In the coming months, despite the obvious pain and challenges, our son’s commitment to the sport, to the team and to the university only seemed to grow stronger. He and others fought hard to keep the team in play but ultimately the program had to fold the following year due to some lasting impacts of the accident.

A lot of ‘God’ things have come together to put Liberty Lacrosse Flames back on the field and a lot of hard work has been done by each and every member of this 2013 SELC Championship team. But from my perspective no single contributing factor is greater than the ‘never quit’ legacy that Dr. Falwell left behind. His vision, his faith and his passion for creating “Champions for Christ” has produced a harvest so bountiful that it is still being reaped today. His legacy is embodied by the Liberty senior administration that has supported and encouraged this team for the past three years. It is embodied by the ‘Champion for Christ’ that graduated just weeks after Dr. Falwell’s passing in 2007 and who accepted the challenge to rebuild the team when the coaching opportunity arose three years later. It is embodied by the parents and

“Let us not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up”.

Galatians 6:9
ardent supporters who faithfully attended home games and travelled many miles to away games. And it is embodied by each player that is a member of this championship team.

I would be naive to think that Coach Kyle’s ‘come to Liberty’ story is unique. No doubt every member of the team has a story of his own – one in which God is at work. They have all faced adversity and challenges and pushed through. Each of their journeys is different. Their success this season is not just measured by their winning games. The real win for this team has been the accomplishment of setting a goal, working hard to achieve it, learning some tough lessons along the way, and knowing that they have given it their all. They have learned not to quit. And even though, unlike their coach, they never had the privilege of hearing a Jerry Falwell Sr. ‘Never Quit’ sermon under the dome in the Vine Center first-hand, these team members all embody the spirit of the message. Jerry would be proud of their accomplishments. His legacy lives on.

While we have made many trips to Lynchburg since that first one in 2004 we have never made the one to collect Kyle and bring him home. In fact, he even accepted the challenge made often by Jerry Sr. during convocation to “not leave Liberty University without finding your {life}-mate” and married his wife, Lauren, two months after graduating in 2007. His home and his family are now entrenched in Lynchburg and Liberty University.

His Dad and I have no idea what the future holds but we do know that God is faithful. Kyle has been well-equipped and undeniably blessed by his time on ‘the mountain’. It is our hope that the players that have come to mean so much to him continue to play out that ‘never quit’ legacy; continue to represent the University in a meaningful way; and continue to glorify the Lord in all aspects of their lives. Well done team!

2013 MCLA CHAMPIONSHIPS

May 13-18, 2013 – Greenville, South Carolina

The Men’s Collegiate Lacrosse Association (MCLA) is a national organization of non-NCAA, college Lacrosse programs. The MCLA currently operates with 200+ teams in two divisions, across ten conferences.

The National Championships are a week-long tournament that allow 16 teams from each division to compete for the chance to be crowned champion of their respective division.

The 2013 MCLA National Championships will be held at the Wenwood Soccer Complex and the Sirrine Stadium in Greenville, SC. For information including tickets and live streaming of all 30 tournament games go to http://mcla.us/

Liberty’s first game of the tournament will be against UMLL DIV II North Dakota State University (NDSU) at 10:30 am on Monday May 13 at the Wenwood Soccer Complex – Field #4

All 30 games of the MCLA DI and DII tournaments will be webcast live Greenville on mcla.us, with the Flames' potential quarterfinal match set for Tuesday at 10:30 a.m., their semifinal Thursday at 2 p.m., and the championship Saturday at 5 p.m.

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS: If you would like to be removed from the distribution list or have an article, suggestion, or notice to post in future editions please send contact: liberty.flames.lacrosse.newsltr@aol.com.