

# Guilford College

## SPORTS INFORMATION

5800 West Friendly Avenue • Greensboro, N.C. 27410 • (336) 316-2107 • FAX: (336) 316-2953 • e-mail: [dwalters@guilford.edu](mailto:dwalters@guilford.edu)

### GUILFORD MEN'S BASKETBALL NOTES - MARCH 7, 2008

#### Guilford in the NCAA Tournament

Guilford is making its second Division III NCAA Tournament appearance tonight and the second in as many years. The Quakers have not hosted an NCAA men's tournament game before tonight. Guilford received an at-large selection to last season's and reached the national quarterfinals before falling to Old Dominion Athletic Conference (ODAC) rival Virginia Wesleyan College, 81-71. Guilford owns a 3-1 record in NCAA Tournament contests.

Before joining the NCAA Division III ranks in 1991, Guilford competed in the NAIA and posted an 8-8 record in seven national tournament games, most recently in 1989. Led by future NBA players **M.L. Carr '73, World B. Free '76 and Greg Jackson '74**, the Quakers won the 1973 NAIA national title. Guilford placed fourth in the 1970 NAIA Tournament.

#### Last Time Out

Guilford won its first ODAC Tournament title with a 91-80 overtime victory over Virginia Wesleyan Sunday. Guilford needed extra time to win its 16th straight game after the Marlins erased an 18-point second-half deficit. Ben Strong, the tournament's Most Outstanding Player, recorded his league- and career-high 21st double-double of the season with 28 points and 15 rebounds. Clay Henson and Caleb Kimbrough added 19 and 18 points, respectively, on their way to all-tournament team honors. The Quakers outscored the Marlins in the paint, 38-20, and held a 37-25 rebounding edge.

#### Scouting the Quakers

The Quakers enter the tournament ranked third in the final NCAA Division III South Region rankings and eighth in this week's D3hoops.com Top 25 Poll. Guilford has won a season-best 16 straight games, the team's longest winning streak since 1969-70. Coach Tom Palombo's club ranks second in the ODAC and 17th in NCAA Division III with 83.3 points per game and likes to push the ball up the floor. Much of the Quakers' success stems from their commitment to rebounding and team defense, categories in which Guilford has led NCAA Division III for most of the year. Through games of March 2, Guilford ranked first nationally in rebound margin (+11.7), second in field-goal percentage defense (.378) and seventh in scoring margin (+14.3).

Palombo has built Guilford around the size and talent of 6-11 senior center Ben Strong, who last week became the fifth two-time ODAC Men's Basketball Player of the Year, the first since 1988. Strong ranks fourth among this week's NCAA Division III scoring leaders (25.4 ppg.) and 12th in rebounding (10.9 rpg.). The reigning NCAA Division III Player of the Year has made significant improvement in each of his four seasons and the team has progressed as well. With Strong and 6-10 sophomore Tyler Sanborn patrolling the paint, sophomore Clay Henson has developed into the Quakers' top perimeter scorer. The athletic wingman can score from all over the court and is especially dangerous when he finds his comfort zone, as he did Jan. 2 versus NCAA

#### GUILFORD COLLEGE QUAKERS

(24-4, 16-2 ODAC)

| Date  | Opponent                    | Time      |
|-------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| 11/17 | VILLA JULIE .....           | W 87-52   |
| 11/28 | at Greensboro .....         | L 66-71   |
| 12/01 | at Lynchburg* .....         | W 101-55  |
| 12/05 | METHODIST .....             | W 74-48   |
| 12/08 | at NC Wesleyan .....        | W 91-80   |
| 12/17 | at Shenandoah .....         | L 62-64   |
| 01/02 | AVERETT .....               | W 82-63   |
| 01/05 | at Emory .....              | W 82-67   |
| 01/09 | HAMPDEN-SYDNEY* .....       | W 93-79   |
| 01/12 | RANDOLPH-MACON* .....       | L 60-69   |
| 01/13 | VIRGINIA WESLEYAN* ..       | W 85-69   |
| 01/16 | at Roanoke* .....           | L 56-68   |
| 01/19 | at Emory & Henry* .....     | W 120-112 |
| 01/23 | ROANOKE* .....              | W 92-56   |
| 01/26 | at Bridgewater* .....       | W 85-80   |
| 01/27 | at Eastern Mennonite* ..    | W 103-75  |
| 02/02 | at Randolph-Macon* .....    | W 69-51   |
| 02/03 | at Virginia Wesleyan* ..... | W 75-67   |
| 02/06 | WASHINGTON & LEE* ...       | W 64-60   |
| 02/09 | LYNCHBURG* .....            | W 103-53  |
| 02/13 | at Hampden-Sydney* .....    | W 78-71   |
| 02/16 | BRIDGEWATER* .....          | W 77-69   |
| 02/17 | EAST.MENNONITE* ....        | W 100-93  |
| 02/20 | at Washington & Lee* .....  | W 65-52   |
| 02/23 | EMORY & HENRY* ....         | W 122-104 |
| 02/29 | v Eastern Mennonite# .....  | W 88-66   |
| 03/01 | v Roanoke# .....            | W 67-57   |
| 03/02 | v Virginia Wesleyan# .....  | W 91-80   |
| 03/07 | ST. MARY'S (Md.)% .....     | 8:00 pm.  |

\*-Old Dominion Athletic Conference game  
#- ODAC Tournament (Salem, Va.)

%- NCAA Tournament (Greensboro, N.C.)

#### GUILFORD QUICK FACTS

**Location:** ..... Greensboro, N.C.

**Founded:** ..... 1837

**Enrollment:** ..... 2,576

**Nickname:** ..... Quakers

**Affiliation:** ..... NCAA Division III

**Conference:** Old Dominion Athletic Conf.

**Head Coach:** ..... Tom Palombo

**Alma Mater:** ..... Virginia Wesleyan '89

**Overall Men's Record:** .... 191-109 (11th season)

**Guilford Record:** ..... 91-46 (5th season)

**All-Time Record:** 882-1000 (94th season)

**Sports Info. Director:** ..... Dave Walters

#### PROBABLE STARTERS

|   |     |   |                      |
|---|-----|---|----------------------|
| F | #40 | Eric Belkoski (Sr., Rockingham, N.C.) ..... | 10.4 ppg., 5.0 rpg.  |
| F | #42 | Ben Strong (Sr., Chapel Hill, N.C.) .....   | 25.4 ppg., 10.9 rpg. |
| C | #15 | Tyler Sanborn (So., Elkin, N.C.) .....      | 7.1 ppg., 7.0 rpg.   |
| G | #11 | Clay Henson (So., Glen Alpine, N.C.) .....  | 13.1 ppg., 3.3 apg.  |
| G | #13 | Caleb Kimbrough (Sr., Carrboro, N.C.) ..... | 8.1 ppg., 3.9 apg.   |

#### KEY RESERVES

|   |     |  |                    |
|---|-----|--|--------------------|
| G | #03 | Ray Edmond (Sr., Kernersville, N.C.) .....   | 2.8 ppg., 2.6 rpg. |
| G | #10 | T.C. Anderson (Fr., Morrisville, N.C.) ..... | 2.4 ppg., 1.2 apg. |
| F | #23 | George Neville (Jr., Westminster, Md.) ..... | 6.8 ppg., 4.5 rpg. |
| G | #34 | Rhett Bonner (So., Yadkinville, N.C.) .....  | 5.0 ppg., 1.3 apg. |

Tournament-participant Averett University. He hit for a career-high 29 points versus the Cougars on 10-of-16 field-goal shooting, including a school-record tying nine three-pointers.

The experience of four seniors and nine letter winners returning from last year's 24-5 club that reached the NCAA Division III quarterfinals has enhanced the team's play and should prove valuable this weekend.

The Quakers have shot the ball well all year and the team's .488 field-goal percentage leads the league and ranks 26th nationally. Guilford has made at least 50 percent of its field goals nine times this year. The team also shoots well from the free-throw line, as seen in its ODAC-best 76.7 percentage that stands 12th nationally.

### **Head Coach Tom Palombo**

Guilford's 14th head coach, Tom Palombo took over for Butch Estes in July 2003 after Estes departed Guilford following four seasons of restoring the Quakers' program to respectability. A year ago, Palombo's Quakers broke onto the national scene with a 24-5 record (Guilford's best in over 30 years) and their first NCAA Division III playoff appearance, which ended in the national quarterfinals. For his efforts, the 18-year head coaching veteran won his second ODAC Men's Basketball Coach of the Year Award and received South Region Coach of the Year honors from the National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) and D3hoops.com.

Palombo has a 91-46 record in over four Guilford seasons and a 191-109 mark in 10-plus years as a head men's basketball coach. Four Quakers have earned All-ODAC honors seven times under Palombo's guidance, including Ben Strong, one of only five two-time ODAC Players of the Year. Strong also captured 2007-08 national player of the year recognition from the NABC and D3hoops.com.

A 1989 Virginia Wesleyan graduate, Palombo returned to his ODAC roots from Defiance (Ohio) College, where he coached the men's basketball team to a 100-63 mark and two NCAA Division III Tournament appearances in six seasons. His teams were known for their full-court defensive pressure and high-scoring offense. The Yellow Jackets routinely ranked among the national scoring leaders. He directed Defiance's women's basketball team to a 78-7 record and three NCAA playoff berths in as many seasons before taking over the men's team.

Palombo and his wife, Amy, live in Greensboro with their four children Kylee, Reagan, Davis and Caleb.

### **The Man In The Middle**

At 6-11, center Ben Strong is one of the ODAC's tallest student-athletes. Last week he picked up the league's Men's Basketball Player of the Year Award for the second straight season. Guilford's first three-time First Team All-ODAC pick leads the league in scoring (25.4 ppg.), rebounds (10.9 rpg.) and blocked shots (2.2 bpg.). He won a school-record five ODAC Men's Basketball Player of the Week awards this season and 13 of the weekly honors in his career. His career-high 21 double-doubles and 22 20-point games lead the league. Strong scored a season-high 39 points versus Eastern Mennonite University and Emory & Henry College, two of his eight 30-point games this year. The Most Outstanding Player of the 2008 ODAC Tournament, he averaged 25.9 points and 10.1 rebounds in 18 league contests.

Strong, who has broken his own Guilford NCAA Division III season scoring record this year with 712 points, passed the 2,000 career-points mark this season and holds second place on the Quakers' all-time scoring list with 2,206 points in 111 games. He passed the likes of former NBA stars M.L. Carr '73 and World B. Free '76 on his climb up the scoring chart and trails former NBA player Bob Kauffman's '68 2,570 points. Strong stands seventh among Guilford's career rebounders with 921 boards and second with 234 career blocks. Last weekend he set ODAC records for career free throws (511) and free-throw attempts (687). He needs two blocks for the league's all-time mark and is 117 points shy of the league scoring standard. Strong captured NABC NCAA Division III Co-Player of the Year honors last season and won D3hoops.com's National Player of the Year prize after averaging 25.4 points and 11.2 boards per game in Guilford's 24-5 campaign. Strong set NCAA Division III Tournament, ODAC and school scoring records with 59 points in last year's triple-overtime win over Lincoln (Pa.) University in a third-round NCAA game.

### **C-Note**

Quietly running the point for the fourth straight year is senior Caleb Kimbrough. Ben Strong's former middle-school and high-school teammate, Kimbrough is integral to Guilford's success. He received honorable mention all-conference and All-ODAC Tournament recognition last week and Guilford's prestigious English Athletic Leadership Award Monday. Kimbrough ranks third among the league leaders free-throw percentage (.817), fourth in assists (3.93) and fifth in assist-to-turnover ratio (1.72). He has only

scored in double figures nine times this year, but has at least 10 points in each of the last four games. With 353 career assists, he ranks fourth among Guilford's career leaders and also has 128 steals, which shares third place all-time at Guilford. Also an All-ODAC tennis performer, Kimbrough won Guilford's Quaker Club Ideal Student-Athlete and Richard Joyce Sportsmanship Awards last year.

### **Rising to the Occasion**

Senior Eric Belkoski came to Guilford as a blue-collar post known for scrappy play on both ends of the floor. He has refined and improved his game each year and is enjoying his finest campaign as a senior. Now with additional offensive and defensive responsibilities on the perimeter, Belkoski ranks third on the team in scoring (10.4 ppg.) and rebounding (5.0 rpg.). He has scored in double figures 17 times with three double-doubles. The three-year starter matched his career best with a team-high 21 points in the Quakers' regular-season finale, a 122-104 win over visiting Emory & Henry College.

### **The View's Much Better From Here**

Reserve guard Rhett Bonner may have dropped down a couple of competitive levels when he transferred from Division I Presbyterian College to Guilford in January, but he surely has won many more games with the Quakers. Bonner played sparingly in 11 games last year and four games this season for the Blue Hose, who went 5-25 in its first year of NCAA Division I membership. The former North Forsyth (N.C.) High School standout was originally recruited by Guilford and has averaged over 16 minutes per contest in 22 games off the bench, during which time the Quakers are 20-2. He is one of the team's top reserves and averages 5.0 points per game.

### **Did You Know?**

Guilford has sent four players to NBA. Bob Kauffman '68, Guilford's career scoring and rebounding leader, was the third pick of the 1968 NBA Draft and played seven years in the league. M.L. Carr '73 and World B. Free '76 helped the Quakers to the 1972-73 NAIA national title before enjoying successful pro careers. Carr played on two world champions in Boston and served as the Celtics' head coach and general manager. Free left Guilford after his junior year and scored 17,955 points in 13 NBA seasons. A third member of Guilford's 1972-73 team, Greg Jackson '74, was drafted by the New York Knicks and played with Phoenix and Washington.