

Swim Team Rides Wave of Optimism into First Season

By Ryan Early '05

The waters of the Ragan-Brown Field House swimming pool have rarely been disturbed since the YMCA branch left the site in March of 2003, but that has now changed. On Sept. 29 at 6 a.m., while most of their fellow students slept, 24 young women churned the pool waters into frothy foam in the first women's swimming practice in college history.

Steve Kaczmarek brings 30 years of swim coaching experience to Guilford from his days managing teams in the Corpus Christi Independent School System. Over his years of coaching, and through his participation in the U.S. Swim Coaches Association, he built a network of contacts that aided recruiting. While it is impossible to know exactly how the addition of swimming attracted new students to Guilford, it is telling that all but one of the 24 women committed to the team are from outside North Carolina.

The team's novelty surely attracted the prospective swimmers. "That's one of the things that made recruiting easy because it's real attractive for [swimmers] to be on a first-year team," Kaczmarek says.

Caroline Hill '08 of Concord, N.C., and **Amanda Oehlert '08** of Oklahoma City, Okla., agree.

"I've been on a new team before in high school and it was awesome," Hill says. "Hopefully I can set some records."

"It's exciting to be part of something new," Oehlert adds. "I want to look back after four years and say that I helped make this."



Melissa Narro '08, left, and Elena Soliz '08

JULIE KNIGHT

Because this is a new program, all swimmers are welcome. Practices are held each weekday morning. Though attendance isn't mandatory, those who want to compete in one of the team's seven meets are prepared to show up and work hard.

While Hill considers herself a freestyle sprinter and Oehlert says she's a freestyle distance swimmer, they'll have to swim every distance and type of stroke in practice. "All of our swimmers will be I.M.'ers," Kaczmarek explains, referring to the individual medley event, where a swimmer uses all four strokes – the backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle. "It gives us more depth and more options."

While most teams take time to develop, swimming squads can be competitive immediately. Swimming is not an age-dependent sport where a participant improves as he or she matures. "Some of the fastest swimmers in the United States

are 14 and 15 years old," Kaczmarek says. "The fact that most of the team consists of freshmen is not a drawback for us."

With his extensive coaching background, Kaczmarek has the confidence to set high goals for the short term and long term. "I want Guilford to compete with the best Division III schools in the nation. I want [Guilford] to win conference championships every year. I want a relay to qualify for the national championships on a consistent basis."

For this year, he is more cautiously optimistic and stresses the need to evaluate the team at practice and in its first meet (Oct. 30 at Emory & Henry College) before setting concrete goals. But he expects the Quakers to do well within the Old Dominion Athletic Conference. "From what I've seen of times from the other teams in the conference, I think we'll try to at least be third this year," he says.

Athletic Staff Members Take on New Responsibilities

The Department of Athletics announced new appointments and changes in staff responsibilities as the new academic year opened.

Tom Palombo is director of the Quaker Club in addition to his men's basketball coach responsibilities. Palombo joined the staff in 2003 and guided the men's basketball team to a 15-11 record. He shared Old Dominion Athletic Conference Coach of the Year honors.

William Fickes is men's tennis coach in addition to his role as a men's basketball assistant coach. Fickes joined the staff in 2003. The men's tennis team is returning to competition after a two-year hiatus. Palombo

had been originally assigned the job as tennis coach.

Scott Smith is men's and women's cross country coach in addition to his assistant women's basketball coaching duties. The cross country teams are making their NCAA Division III debut this fall. Tim Kaine was cross country coach before he left for a men's basketball job at Newberry College (S.C.) this summer.

Matthew Grosso is women's lacrosse coach and assistant sports information director. He replaced Tara Caminiti-Raggett, who resigned the lacrosse post in May. Grosso served as assistant women's lacrosse coach

at Goucher College (Md.) from 1999-2004.

Jaime Kutz is assistant volleyball coach. In May, she graduated from High Point University, where she was an outstanding recreation major and volleyball player. She is assisting second-year coach Glenda Dellinger.

Elizabeth Dornbos and **Shannon Swiatkiewicz** are assistant athletic trainers, working with Head Trainer Mary Broos. They were graduate assistants at the University of Utah. Dornbos graduated from Hope College (Mich.) and Swiatkiewicz, from the University of New England.