



CARDINAL SPORTS



CARDINAL COURIER

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St. John Fisher College

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ATHLETES OF THE YEAR

The staffs of the Cardinal Courier Sports Department and Fisher Sports Desk chose two St. John Fisher athletes, one male and one female, who have demonstrated athletic excellence, to be honored as the 2006-2007 Cardinal Courier Athletes of the Year. Athletes from all Fisher sports (fall to spring) were considered for the award. Each staff member ranked nominees on a scale of one through ten by means of a secret ballot. The results then were tallied using a point system, determining the winners.



John Sekol

Senior Gene Lang (3) celebrates the 34-10 victory over conference rival Ithaca College.

Gene Lang

SPORTS EDITOR
MIKE SPIER

Most people would tell you that a middle linebacker listed as 5-foot-11 and 200 pounds doesn't have the size to play the position.

Tell that to a linebacker with 147 tackles, 67 of them solo, in the 2006 season.

Tell that to a linebacker that was a two-time D3football.com All-American.

Tell that to the *Don Hansen Football Gazette* Linebacker of the Year.

Tell that all to Gene Lang.

"Gene never let his size get in the way and he always played bigger than he is," Cardinals head coach Paul Vosburgh said. "I've told people that if three or four guys were walking down the street together, the guy that you wouldn't pick out that was the All-American would be Gene Lang. He just has natural instincts for playing football which makes him a very good football player and leader."

Many times during the year, Lang exhibited his leadership abilities. One such example was before the last regular season game when the Cardinals played the Alfred Saxons. In the 2005 season, the Cardinals lost at home to the Saxons, which prevented them from going to the NCAA Division III Tournament.

Lang wasn't about to let that happen again in his senior year.

Before the game, Lang stood up in the locker room and said that he was going to the playoffs and asked who was going to follow him. All of the players were behind Lang as the Cardinals' beat Alfred 41-13.

"[That speech] was very inspirational to me," sophomore linebacker Kevin Reeverts

said. "You could see the drive that he had, and everyone knew he was going to be the one to get us into the playoffs."

Although it was important, Lang didn't consider the Alfred game the key point in the season. After getting embarrassed by Springfield's junior quarterback Chris Sharpe, who ran for 280 yards and seven touchdowns on Oct. 21, the Cardinals' defense would have a second chance against the Pride in the playoffs on Nov. 25.

"The defense really took a step back that week," Lang said. "I'm just glad we had a second chance to play them again."

Lang took that second chance very seriously.

Perhaps the most important play of the year happened in that game, with 12:26 remaining in the second quarter. Sharpe handed Springfield fullback Andrew Jackson the ball at Fisher's goal line. He pounded through the middle of the defense, but Lang was standing there, poised to make something happen.

He did.

Lang stripped the ball and Fisher gained possession of the ball. The Cardinals went on to win by six points, 27-21.

"The ball was there and I was just the guy to strip it out," Lang said. "I think that really helped give us momentum for the rest of the game, and in the end turned out to be the touchdown difference in the game."

The big win against Springfield propelled the team past Rowan University and all the way to the Final Four game against Mt. Union. The Cardinals lost that game, 26-14, but Lang finished with a-

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Sports Information

Junior Laurie Quackenbush leads the Lady Cardinals in four statistical categories.

Laurie Quackenbush

ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR
TYLER DUNNE

Laurie Quackenbush admits that she can't play *Guitar Hero*.

Instead of being mesmerized by colored dots and *Free Bird* on an addicting video game, she interns at the accounting firm, Deloitte & Touche LPP, while carrying a 3.6 GPA on the Dean's List.

Instead of wearing her accomplishments on a title belt for all to see, the junior midfielder from Penn Yan, N.Y., has become the face of St. John Fisher women's lacrosse in a humble, down-to-earth fashion.

Persistent dominance in the Empire 8 conference easily could have inflated Quackenbush's ego over her three seasons. But it hasn't. Rather than build herself up as a campus celebrity by cutting lunch lines and skipping class, Quackenbush has evolved into the grateful, unselfish architect of a women's lacrosse team rapidly becoming a regional power.

As a freshman, Quackenbush broke onto the scene with a team-leading 35 goals, while making the Empire 8 first team. Two years later, she is still the go-to scorer on the Cardinals. But this Quackenbush is different. The scrappy 5-foot-5 spark plug has evolved into a dangerous two-way player that can affect a game without even scoring a goal.

"I'm seeing the field better and trying to make other people feel good about themselves," she said. "My freshman year, I'd drive to the goal a lot, and now I'd rather pass it."

And do just about everything else. Quackenbush leads the Lady Cardinals in goals (26), assists (13), groundballs (45)

and draw controls (22). It's not like she was lacrosse's equivalent to Kobe Bryant as a rookie (she led the team in assists as a freshman with eight). But now she parallels Steve Nash with a pair of goggles on, using savvy field vision to open up scoring lanes for teammates.

In a year where a team concept drove the St. John Fisher men's basketball and football teams deep into the postseason, Quackenbush has established similar morale in women's lacrosse.

"I try to encourage my teammates and have a hard work ethic, so they'll work hard too," she said. "I don't really care about goals. I'd rather have groundballs and assist other players than score, because I like to see my teammates happy."

Quackenbush's dedication to team harmony sets the tone for each practice. Just ask some of the team's newcomers.

"In the beginning, Laurie was really intimidating," freshman Jillian Lockwood said. "You could just look at her and tell that you didn't want to go up against her. Being a freshman is hard, because it seems that all eyes are on you, but Laurie was always willing to give constructive criticism."

What fuels Laurie Quackenbush? She embraces challenges. With Deloitte & Touche, she collaborated with a team to perform an audit on Excellus BlueCross BlueShield financial statements. A challenge is what lured Quackenbush to Cardinal red in the first place.

As a prospective collegiate lacrosse player in high school, Quackenbush's head coach informed her that a Division I schol-

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