



Go Dukes! Alumni sluggers take the title

By Greg Slang ('00)

The scene on the field following the alumni softball team's championship win over the Virginia Tech Hokies, Aug. 17, 2003, could only be compared to that of the atmosphere after a Stanley Cup championship. As third baseman Scott Brubaker fielded the final out, the bench flooded the field to meet the 10 starters at the center of the diamond. The immediate scene was one of jubilant chaos. Players raced to jump up and down, embrace, and finally, tackle one another.

It all seemed so logical. It was the pinnacle of a tremendous season both on and off the field. One couldn't help but feel the Dukes on the field that day somehow accomplished one of the greatest athletic feats in JMU history. I say that tongue-in-cheek, but the softball team would surely argue otherwise.

JMU has been fielding an alumni softball team for five seasons dating back to 1999. The team was founded by current head coach, Heather Glynn and Melissa Shank as part of the Capital Alumni Network <www.dcalum.org>. The Capital Alumni Network is the largest alumni network in the country with information on 192 alumni organizations. The network's softball league is the most highly participated sporting event with 41 active teams.

JMU brought an immediate spark to the league as they built a reputation as one of the liveliest teams both on and off the field. Although JMU was arguably the worst team in its inaugural season, the team prided itself on its ability to party at the Bottom Line. CAN softball teams gather daily at this local Washington, D.C., bar following each game to enjoy drink specials and meet players from other teams. JMU became a "fan favorite" from their early days due to their tendency to drink more beers than they scored runs. Their lovable spirits more closely resembled the Bad News Bears than the championship team they would become. The sophomore campaign ended in the same dismal results, before the Dukes landed 4th and 3rd place finishes in the 2001 and 2002 seasons.

The 2003 season began with a fresh field of 41 teams as players vied to "save" a field on the Washington Mall as early as 3 p.m. for a 6:30 game. The commencement of softball season also marks the beginning of the most dangerous tourist season, and some nights feature as many as 10 simultaneous games with balls flying in every direction. The outfield can be one of the most treacherous

positions as the outfielders are not only responsible for fielding, but they must direct tourist traffic and avoid outfielders and flying balls from the games behind them. With no homerun walls, this is truly a unique area to play. Of course, the infield isn't exactly the safest place either. It's anyone's guess as to how the ball will bounce. It's not uncommon to witness a broken nose and/or bruised ego when the ball skips up and plants itself in your face.

The camaraderie of 2003 Dukes was fostered by Saturday afternoon barbeques, flip-cup competitions at the Bottom Line and golfing events. Post-game birthday cake on the Mall wouldn't be out of the question either. The alumni softball players more closely resembled a fraternity than it did a team. Due in part to their tight-knit relationships, the Dukes were able to coast through the regular season with an 11-4 record and division title.

2003 regular season action:

James Madison 29	NC State 9
James Madison 14	South Carolina 4
Illinois 12	James Madison 10
James Madison 5	Pittsburgh 3
James Madison 8	Georgetown 3
James Madison 16	Connecticut 10
Colgate 9	James Madison 2
Virginia Tech 11	James Madison 0
James Madison 14	Florida 6
James Madison 12	Penn State 2
James Madison 21	George Washington 7
Bucknell 11	James Madison 8
James Madison 17	Florida State 3
James Madison 9	Baylor 6
James Madison 19	Georgia Tech 6

The Capital Alumni Network season piques at the weekend-long tournament held at Bowling Air Force Base, as 41 teams are seeded and compete for the championship during a grueling double elimination tournament. This could easily be one of D.C.'s best-kept secrets as \$25 will buy you a T-shirt, "all you can eat" barbeque for two days and a beer truck providing unlimited refreshments. While some teams stumbled (literally) through the tournament, the Dukes managed to put together a clean 6-0 sweep.

JMU 6	Massachusetts 4
JMU 6	William & Mary 1
JMU 6	Colgate 2
JMU 10	Penn State 4
JMU 9	Penn State 5
JMU 10	Virginia Tech 7

The Dukes had the ever-growing support of the crowd en route to the championship. The season and tournament were capped by Madison's first-ever victory over the previously undefeated Virginia Tech Hokies and a final 2003 record of 17-4. What makes the JMU victory particularly impressive is that the school became the smallest (by enrollment) to win the title. Schools such as Penn State, Virginia Tech, Michigan and Texas are a few of the previous champions, which were able to benefit from larger alumni pools to field teams.

Think of the James Madison softball team as a microcosm of the tremendous school spirit and pride that exudes each current undergrad. This is a fun bunch of Dukes that know how to have a good time, support one another (even if occasionally in a heckling manner), and represent the school with pride.

2003 JMU Alumni Softball Dukes Player / Position / Graduating Class

Boswell, Steve	OF	1992
Bouldry, Melissa	C	1998
Brubaker, Scott	3B	2001 *
Comerford, Gary	OF	1996
Joy 2B		1992
Coursey, John	OF	1997
Crouse, Kim	2B	1998
Dacko, Steph	P	1999

Dutrow, Jim	OF	2001	
Elkins, Lee	OF	1999	
Glahn, Mike	DH	2002	
Glynn, Heather	C	1995	**
Harris, Trevor	P, SS	1996	
King, Steven	DH	1989	
Lannan, Chris	DH	2000	
Lich, Jason	OF	1994	
Madison, Dave	3B	2001	
Mikoy, Brett	OF	1996	
Moden, Matt	OF	1998	
Paczkowski, Becca	2B	2001	
Rickman, Nathan	OF	2001	
Sampson, Matt	OF	1995	
Sapsford, Matt	OF	2000	
Shank, Melissa	C	1995	
Sherwin, Jenn	C	1993	
Shaw, Nai-Chung	DH	2001	
Slang, Greg	SS	2000	
Smith, Trish	C	1992	
Snyder, Deb	1B	1987	
Stalings, Tim	P	1987	
Terry, Cuaduana	P	1999	
Wade, Frank	OF	1995	
Welck, Troy	P	1994	
Wegrzyn, Amanda	C	2001	
Wright, Wendy	C	1999	

* Tournament MVP
** Head Coach