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:**

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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
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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.

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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
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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**

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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
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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