The End of an Era

Mark Warner discusses his future and plans to retire

NEWS | 4

FINDING YOUR VOICE
How Americans must speak out amid political chaos

OPINION
10

CHECK OUT OUR FOOTBALL SUPPLEMENT INSIDE

COVERING THE STAGE
JMU alumna takes on Broadway role in ‘Miss Saigon’

CULTURE
14
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BY EMMA KORYNTA
The Breeze

The Convocation Center is nearly empty as first-year students and First Year Orientation Guides prepare to flood in. Slowly but surely, the seats fill with new students, eager to see what the year awaits. At the top of the bleachers, sitting by himself, Mark Warner watches as the new community gathers. This is one of his favorite things — he describes it as magic.

After 41 years on JMU’s campus, Warner will be retiring at the end of the 2017-18 school year. Labor laws require that he take off six months before returning, but he plans to come back in the spring of 2019 to teach two sections of his highly popular PSYC 326 leadership class.

“I want to be able to retire when I’m still young and can go and enjoy things,” Warner said. “But knowing that I’ll still have the classroom to keep me connected.”

Warner started as a freshman at JMU in 1975 as a psychology major, but he often jokes that he majored in frisbee. For his entire undergraduate and graduate career, he lived in the Village on campus. His first of 10 jobs at JMU was in the Office of Residence Life, but his titles have included executive assistant to the president as well as senior vice president of student affairs — a position he’s held for 20 years.

Leslie Beam, the administrative assistant to Warner, has worked at JMU for 23 years and with Warner for 16. She feels she has the best boss at JMU, and calls herself “the luckiest person on campus.”

“What is it that you’re going to do today to add value to your life, and what are you going to do to add value to somebody else’s?”

Mark Warner
Senior vice president of student affairs

“Mark Warner to retire after 41 years at JMU”

Mark Warner started his undergraduate career at JMU in 1975 and hasn’t left since. He has worked several jobs with multiple JMU presidents over the years, but he prioritizes students and personal growth.
Mike Davis transitions to the executive office to work with President Alger

By CHRISTINA ZIU
The Breeze

Mike Davis has been named the executive adviser to JMU President Jonathan Alger. Davis started his new position on Aug. 17 after working as a professor in the School of Communication Studies for the past 11 years.

“I’d worked with President Alger on several initiatives ... I found that we saw the world a lot of the same ways,” Davis said. “We both wanted JMU to really become the national model for the engaged university.”

Davis received his undergraduate and master’s degree in communication studies at Syracuse University and his doctorate at the University of Georgia. At JMU, he taught over 24 different classes and was the director of the debate team.

Now, as part of the Senior Leadership Team, Davis advises Alger on university policy issues, does research and answers questions people have for the president’s office.

“I’m one of those people who likes to know what’s going on all over the university, and this is sort of the perfect job for that because my natural curiosity leads me to seek out others who are doing really awesome stuff,” Davis said. “Being in the president’s office really allows me to trumpet those programs that we should all be really proud of.”

Davis started the job less than a week after he accepted the offer. He describes taking on his new position as “trying to hop on a moving treadmill.” However, the fact that he was a JMU professor helps him adjust to his new position.

“I want to be the eyes and ears on the ground,” Davis said. “I think that the fact that I was a faculty member for 11 years means I know a lot of what’s going on on campus and I think the ability to bring those things back to [Alger] is really important.”

As a professor, Davis found each day to be predictable. However, his new role has him dealing with a lot of unexpected tasks.

“Before, as a faculty member, I sort of knew what my day would look like,” Davis said. “Here, I know there’s going to be 10 things that come across my desk or come into my email box; that at the beginning of the day, I would have never said ‘Oh, that’s on my to-do list. That’s what was interesting to me. I like the idea of a new challenge everyday.”

Although Davis is now able to have an effect on the university as a whole, he says the thing he misses most about being a professor is interacting with students on a daily basis.

“That was the biggest hesitation for me — leaving behind the students and debaters,” Davis said. “But I also knew that I could have a bigger impact in a job like this ... for students who I will never see and I can still have an impact on them.”

Autumn Cox, a senior communication studies major, has taken three classes with Davis and considers him to be her favorite professor.

“When I found out he wasn’t going to be a professor anymore, I was so bummed but excited for him because he completely deserved it,” Cox said. “He’s just a really down-to-earth professor,” Cox said. “He always made classrooms feel like a conversation and less like a lecture, which is really nice ... He’ll make sure things are moving in the right direction for JMU.”

Matt Brigham, a communication studies professor, has worked alongside Davis in SCOM.

“Though we will miss him, he will no doubt excel in his new role as executive adviser to President Alger,” Brigham said in an email. “He loves JMU and our mission of engagement and will translate that energy and passion into impacting the entire university culture, just as he has with SCOM and the debate team.”

With his communication studies and debate background, Davis aims to facilitate meaningful conversations among individuals at JMU.

“I think there are lots of difficult conversations that have to take place on college campuses, and I think we’re often not great at that,” Davis said. “I would like to find ways that everyone feels they have a place to have that conversation, to say their opinion, speak their mind in ways that are productive. I think we have the potential, with our engagement focus and with the number of people who are already doing great things on campus, to be that model.”

CONTACT Christina Ziu at ziuct@dukes.jmu.edu. For more coverage of JMU and Harrisonburg news, follow the news desk on Twitter @BreezeNewsJMU.
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September 15 | 2:30 p.m. | Harrison 0102

Join local National Public Radio’s MARTHA WOODROOF as she moderates a discussion about the thrills and challenges of covering political campaigns with two reporters who have done it.

SANDY HAUSMAN is the Charlottesville Bureau Chief and a general assignment reporter for Virginia Public Radio. Before joining VPR, Hausman reported for ABC TV and WBBM radio in Chicago and KDKA radio in Pittsburgh. She was news director for NBC’s FM station in Chicago.

DEAN SCHOTT worked as a reporter for 20 years, including stints with the Chicago Sun-Times, Scripps-Howard Newspapers, the Associated Press and my hometown newspaper, the Canton (Ohio) Repository. Dean also worked 14 years as the chief spokesman for the Illinois Departments of Public Aid and Public Health under four governors.
Every drop counts

A single pint of blood can save up to three lives
Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs a blood transfusion. Despite this constant demand, less than 10 percent of the U.S. population donates annually, according to Virginia Blood Services.

Austin Rehfield, the regional recruitment director for VBS, says student volunteers make up nearly 30 percent of all blood donations. Consequently, blood shortages become a problem during the summer months and holidays.

Now that schools are back in session, blood donation services are looking to make up for lost time. With human lives at risk, the Rotaract Club, a service organization at JMU, teamed up with VBS to enact change.

“We wanted to do this because we believe that any small act of kindness can change someone’s life,” Alison Reyes, a junior marketing major and president of the Rotaract Club, said. “We love to help out with [VBS] because it’s exactly what we do — it’s community service.”

VBS is always searching for new donors. With classes starting, VBS plans to take full advantage of student sellessness.

“Students are awesome,” Rehfield said. “They’re very altruistic and are willing to help people, so it’s important — extremely important — that we try to create lifelong donors. JMU has been a wonderful supporter of the community blood supply.”

VBS and the Rotaract Club encourage students to come, despite the fears or premonitions associated with donating blood. Reyes advises weary students to do some research and come with questions.

“There are so many ways to help and they have so much information, so it really won’t hurt just to go there and learn more about it,” Reyes said.

Additionally, Rehfield suggested that first-time donors bring a friend if they’re nervous. However, he ensures that there’s nothing to worry about.

VBS is a nonprofit organization that conducts almost 27,000 drives each year, according to their website. Additionally, VBS has nine blood donation centers throughout the state of Virginia.

The organization partners with companies, schools, places of worship and civic organizations to host drives whenever they can. These types of partnered blood drives make up nearly half of all blood donations across the U.S., as stated by VBS.

“Come in and allow yourself to relax, knowing that our staff is professional in what they do and they do it everyday — they’re very good at it,” Rehfield said.

According to a survey conducted by VBS, the top reason people want to donate is to aid others. With two blood drives planned every month — one in Festival and one in Madison Union — VBS makes it easy for JMU students to accomplish this goal.

“It is the easiest way to give back to the community,” Knapp said. “But really, there’s no substitute for blood, so the only way we can keep people alive who need it is through the generosity of time and spirit from others.”

With their second blood drive occurring Thursday in Madison Union room 256, VBS and the Rotaract Club encourage JMU students to eat a full breakfast, drink water and come save lives.

“It’s a very, very safe experience and that in less than one hour of your time, you’re going to help three people in need,” Rehfield said. “When you think about that, it’s just awesome that you have that power to do something good like that for people who you are likely to never meet, but will be eternally grateful for what you’ve done.”

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A voice in political chaos

Due to the turmoil brought on by Trump’s cabinet, it’s time to talk strategy. In the past year, the focus of the media has mainly been targeted toward our current president. How will he react to such tragedies, or what controversial comment will he make next? I’ll be the first to admit that it’s very easy to partake in heated discussions with others about the “hot Trump gossip.”

However, as a young person living in America today, I personally feel that when it comes to politics, it’s much more efficient and wise to focus on the issues rather than the gossip. In these trying times, where white supremacy is still alive and well and international threats are more threatening than ever, why do we as Americans focus so much time and energy on one singular person and his responses? Yes, Donald Trump is the president of the United States, and although this title is extremely powerful and intimidating, it doesn’t mean that it’s the end of the world as we know it.

In fact, if we look into our country’s past, we can see that the proud citizens of this great country are the ones who really empowered and caused change to happen.

In the 1950s, the U.S. faced one of the most trying times of its history — the Civil Rights Movement. We, as Americans, found ourselves in a battle against those who didn’t believe in equality and justice for all. People were suffering great battles with discrimination, hatred and even violence. However, it was during this time that one ordinary citizen who happened to become one of the most epic and substantial leaders of our time, stepped up.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. didn’t depend on the political leaders of his time to make the changes he wanted to see in America. Instead, he outwardly spoke and united Americans to band together in a non-violent manner and fight for our equal rights. King inspired so many people with powerful speeches and encouraged them to love and support each other despite the many obstacles against them.

In one speech, he stated that, “I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.”

As a young person living in the South, I often struggle to understand why certain people choose to continuously abuse and hurt those of a different race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or whatever society has deemed “abnormal.” Have we not evolved as a human being to see that we’re so similar despite our slight physical differences?

In times like these, it can feel like we’ve retreated to times where inequality was the norm and differences were rarely accepted.

In fact, if we look into our country’s past, we can see that the proud citizens of this great country are the ones who really empowered and caused change to happen.

At the Charlottesville riots just two weeks ago, Heather Heyer lost her life because she chose to defend those who couldn’t defend themselves. She wasn’t black. She was just a human being who was trying to do the right thing and unfortunately suffered an unjust consequence because of it.

We can learn a lot from Heyer and King as JMU students. We can learn that you should never feel guilty or ashamed for using your voice to help change important issues or start a conversation. We can learn that we don’t have to be part of a certain community or racial background to fight for what’s right.

We as Americans have become so focused on the voice of one person and his beliefs that we’ve lost sight of what we as the people can do to make change. Our voices are much more powerful than we recall. Let’s start using them for good.

Isabel Nappa is a junior social work major. Contact Isabel at nappai@c.dukes.jmu.edu.
**It’s OK to say the F-word**

Exploring the meaning of feminism and other words that carry negative stigmas

Redneck  Feminist  Gay

Deaf  Millennial  Retarded

TEE GIBSON  miss daisy

Imagine a world where actions really did speak louder than words. Ask yourself what terms satisfy you the most to say, and why that is. Are they socially acceptable? There’s a thrill in using words that can sting, but what if we could take that feeling away?

These questions came to me during an African-American literature class I took last semester. We were discussing the usage of the N-word, and its representation of a darker time in American history. The biggest controversy was whether a total abandonment of the word was the right solution, or if making this term more common would enlighten people and take its power away.

This can be said about many expressions also on that fine line, including profanity, slang describing different ethnicities and sexualities, etc. Even titles such as “feminist,” not considered bad or hurtful, often leave a bad taste in people’s mouths. That conception only comes from the ignorance of what the label actually means, and the misinterpreted stereotypes that bring forth the image of a man-hating woman.

You would think that by 2017, with celebrities or prominent figures like Miley Cyrus and Oprah Winfrey supporting movements that promote and encourage women, we’d have moved beyond passing such judgments. But, even in my considerably open-minded family, my dad has looked disapprovingly on as I told my younger sister I was going to attend a feminist meeting. This was only because he didn’t know that meant I would be discussing equality and anti-sexism, and as a result wrongly judged me.

Maybe the pressure and tension placed on these words by society is the only reason they have the power to hurt us. And if this is true, isn’t it our responsibility to make more people become aware of the terms they may be misusing? But how should we go about changing a world that runs on the labeling and placement of people into small-minded categories?

It may be hard to change the older generations’ perspective, but we can still evolve by educating our youth. As author C. JoyBell C. said, “The only way that we can live, is if we grow. The only way that we can grow is if we change. The only way that we can change is if we learn. The only way we can learn is if we’re exposed. And the only way that we can become exposed is if we throw ourselves out into the open. Do it. Throw yourself.”

Only time will tell what we’re capable of, but as I watch my sister grow up, I’ll say the future does look promising.

Tess Gibson is a sophomore writing, rhetoric and technical communication major. Contact Tess at gibson@dukes.jmu.edu.
The contrasting emotions that flood us during the beginning of the school year can, at times, be dramatic. With summer break coming to an end, many of us are closing the proverbial door on our time hanging out with high school friends and leaving behind the internship and research opportunities of the summer. These memories are gone only to be replaced with the stress of seemingly endless months in classrooms and long nights behind thick textbooks.

Of course, returning to Harrisonburg for this new school year is also filled with awaiting adventures and eager friends — which often work hand in hand. It’s thus the result of these varying emotions that create the paradox of happiness joined with fear.

Despite this contrast in emotion, we ought to be overwhelmingly joyful that a new semester is upon us. Fun between friends awaits, as does an improved intellect. As such, we’ll ultimately be spending the semester opening our eyes to a new and greater understanding of the world, while simultaneously engaging in memorable experiences with our friends.

This is the magnificence of college. For many, the uncertainty of this semester may indeed be cause for stress. To eliminate this negativity, enter these next four months with a sunny disposition. Once we seal away the thoughts that provide us with fear, we’ll be far better prepared to undertake the events of this new school year with the required vigor and joy.

So to those who are entering this semester with mixed feelings of summer nostalgia and the oncoming pressures of academic life, it’s going to be OK. I urge you to allow for the pressures of school to relieve themselves by spending time with cherished friends and seeking the inner rewards of an expanded mind and more knowledgeable self.

That’s how the pressures of school will be relieved, that’s how joy will replace stress and that’s how quickly passing time will be properly utilized.

Dan Ford is a senior international affairs and international business double major. Contact Dan at forddm@dukes.jmu.edu.
What you’re really paying for

A closer look into the phenomenon of back-to-school shopping

RISHMITA AICH | pride and prejudice

If you’ve scurried to a mall this week and discovered it to be almost ransacked, then don’t be surprised: It’s back-to-school season. The empty shelves, overloaded carts and never-ending lines at the cashier; the present scene at stores resemble a mass migration movement with flocks of families moving together in groups and collecting as many supplies as possible.

With students returning to Harrisonburg for school and the back-to-school sales coming to an end, the shops have been running dry of supplies. The back-to-school season seems to be the harvest season for retailers — when all the favorable conditions of making profits converge. While students are fueling up for the new academic year, parents are warming up to shell out some big bucks. In fact, according to NBC, Americans are predicted to spend a record-breaking amount of $83.6 billion on school supplies and college gear this year.

There has been a 10 percent increase in the expenditure on back-to-school sale supplies this year, and I think the steadily rising trend of shopping before school ties to a bigger cultural phenomenon of consumerism in college. Even though college students are infamously branded as being broke, the washed-up shelves once full of party cups or embroidered throw pillows that we casually toss into our carts tell a whole different story about the spending budget of an average student.

For decades, the cost of college and whether a degree is worth all the debt has been a topic of frequent debate. Higher education has become synonymous with student loans, but instead of questioning the money-mongering nature of the high tuition prices, one should look at the other dollar-draining facets of the college bubble.

The increasing back-to-school shopping trends show that college costs an overwhelming amount because people are paying for the unstated social goals. With homecoming weekend and a string of social gatherings waiting in line as soon as the year commences, students feel the need to revel in the wake of school spirit by stocking up on college gear or sprucing up their apartments with new furnishings. From new gadgets to the latest fall fashion collections, back-to-school shopping has spread way beyond the realm of just school supplies.

This budding consumerist tendency is often fueled by back-to-school sales, when retailers put massive quantities of cheaper non-essential items for sale. Moreover, even local pizza joints or eateries have laid out craftily designed discounts to lure in more business from students.

While much of what we buy is necessary to recreate a new life away from home, some of the trite purchases are just a result of retailers’ profit-inducing maneuvers or social pressures we put on ourselves to blend into the college life. Colleges are a bigger investment because they encompass a bigger transition. There’s a certain level of intellectual excitement and encouragement in celebrating the non-academic aspects of college life.

Beneath the materialistic traits, there lies status and prestige in showcasing a new life we built for ourselves, often through college gear, expensive dorm décor and fashion apparel. However, it’s important to realize that a wholesome college experience extends far beyond the superficiality of things.

The values, friendships and achievements that one earns in college are the lessons on acceptance that no sale could buy. Budgeting might not be on top of your priority list, but being aware of a cultural malice like consumerism is important. So the next time you see a candleholder on clearance, walk away without any second thoughts of tossing it in your cart.

Rishmita Aich is a senior media arts and design major. Contact Rishmita at aichrx@dukes.jmu.edu.

Write for the opinion section of The Breeze! Contact: breezeopinion@gmail.com for more information
Sensational in ‘Miss Saigon’

By SHANNA KELLY
The Breeze

Lina Lee takes what she learned from her JMU degree in theatre and dance to the big stage.

Lee, a JMU graduate from class of 2015, stars as a performer in the musical, “Miss Saigon” in New York. Lee said, “I think having a background in all of these different aspects of theatre helped me to become a more well-rounded actor.”

Lee’s studies included experimental theatre, contemporary plays, directing, dramaturgy, choreographing, devised theatre and heightened language pieces. While many classes helped Lee become the actress she is today, there was one in particular that helped her grow. This class was the Meisner Intensive taught by Terry Brino-Dean, associate dean of the graduate school and a theatre professor at JMU.

“I think Lina, along with many of our other successful alums, is a great example of the benefits of this type of theatre training and what it can do for the future careers of students,” Dean said.

The Meisner Technique was formed by Sanford Meisner and is a take on the Meisner and is a take on the Meisner Technique, which she described as a long but worthwhile process.

“At this point, after eight months of doing the show, I feel very comfortable on stage,” Lee said in an email. “But there are still days I look out to the audience and think, how amazing is it that this is my job?”

Arecchi was able to see Lee and her growth since graduation when she performed this past summer in “Miss Saigon.”

“It was really exciting to watch how she’s developed in her ability to kind of work within that larger Broadway mechanism because of the machine of a Broadway show, in a really solid and stunning way without losing any of the effervescence that comes off of her in a smaller theatre space,” Arecchi said.

Lee’s first taste of acting was a part as a singing starfish in her school’s play “Tide Pool Condos” in third grade. After that, she joined the drama club in middle school. Pursuing theatre at JMU later on gave Lee the opportunity to experience and experiment with various aspects of the field before concentrating in musical theatre.

“I think having a background in all of these different aspects of theatre helped me to become a more well-rounded actor,” Lee said.

Lee’s studies included experimental theatre, contemporary plays, directing, dramaturgy, choreographing, devised theatre and heightened language pieces.

“Call living truthfully under imaginary circumstances,” Dean said.

Even with eight shows a week, Lee finds time to give back. She’s been a part of multiple benefit concerts, taught Broadway workshops for younger theatre artists and performed at Broadway Bares, an annual benefit for the Broadway community holds.

“We raised over $1.5 million to benefit Broadway Cares Equity Fights AIDS,” Lee said. “This organization not only helps those fighting AIDS, but also provides health care for children, women and artists in the city living without health insurance.”

After graduating from JMU, Lee performed in musicals such as “A Chorus Line,” “Mary Poppins,” “Legally Blonde,” “Chicago,” “My Fair Lady,” “Les Misérables” and more.

Lee, an Asian actress, recently received a letter from an aspiring Asian actress who was inspired to see Lee on stage.

“I hope that my performing in this show can inspire not only other Asian actors, but all the young performers out sitting in a Broadway theatre dreaming about being on that stage to pursue their dreams,” Lee said.

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For more on culture, arts and lifestyle of the JMU and Harrisonburg communities, follow the culture desk on Twitter @Breeze_Culture.
Downtown deli brings N.Y. flavors

Lola Mo’s will be the new hot spot in Harrisonburg for sandwich lovers this fall.

By LEEYAH JACKSON
contributing writer

Lola Mo’s Delicatessen is coming to the heart of Harrisonburg and plans to open its doors in late October or early November. The shop will focus on creating freshly made sandwiches, soups and pastries as well as international and gourmet bulk meat and cheeses.

“We want to take the best of New York delicatessens and European gourmet markets and bring them downtown to Harrisonburg,” Lauren Penrod, co-owner of Lola Mo’s, said.

This collides well with the diverse student population and array of cultures that reside in the Harrisonburg community.

“(Our) target audience is people who live and work downtown and don’t have time to go out to a restaurant for lunch,” Penrod said.

She explains that the deli’s for those who “just want to grab something quick and be on their way.”

Lola Mo’s has three co-owners and the name of the delicatessen came from bits and pieces of each of the owners’ names: (Lo)gan Strawderman, (La)uren Penrod, and (Mo)llie Randa. The three met through hanging out downtown and having mutual friends.

“All three of us are very invested in the Harrisonburg community and especially downtown,” Penrod said. “We understand the needs of this area well, because we’ve lived here so long.”

They decided to keep the delicatessen decor classic by having the center of attention be on the food itself.

When asked what she would recommend to a customer, Penrod said they would all suggest Logan’s Pastrami. It consists of 14-day brined pastrami meat that’s been rubbed with coriander, black pepper and brown sugar, and is smoked with cherry and applewood.

In August, Lola Mo’s placed second in the Rocktown Chili Throwdown with its “Pastrami on Rye” chili. The delicatessen tied with Harrisonburg favorites such as La Morena and Capital Ale House. Although the owners are still working on perfecting the menu, Lola Mo’s states that it’ll provide vegetarian and vegan options.

“The most challenging things for us thus far has definitely been keeping this a secret for so long,” Penrod said. “We have had this in the works for nearly a year, so it’s nice to finally be able to share the plans with the public.”

Kyra Schumacher, a sophomore engineering major, said that her first order will be a ham and swiss on rye.

“I’m very excited to have a proper delicatessen because I had one when I lived in Ohio,” Schumacher said. “The experience is so much more personal and the sandwiches just taste better due to the fresh ingredients.”

Lola Mo’s Delicatessen will be located inside the Keezell building that’s currently being renovated downtown. The building includes apartments upstairs and three businesses on the first floor: Cat’s Cradle, The Yellow Button and Lola Mo’s. The Yellow Button’s owner, Miranda Ebersold, explains the advantage of having neighboring businesses.

“I think it always helps to have other businesses around you,” Ebersold said. “I am sure I will get customers because they are going to Lola Mo’s for lunch and I will have shoppers eat there because it is right next door to The Yellow Button.”

Lola Mo’s started with three strangers in Harrisonburg with a love for downtown and an idea to bring a deli to the area. This fall, their idea will blossom into a reality.

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Go Dukes!
Shortly after releasing her single, “Look What You Made Me Do,” Taylor Swift put out a controversial music video to go with it. Rumors have it that the song and music video are meant to target Kanye West.

Taylor Swift — whose presence existed “in screaming color” in the media — disappear so quickly, and why? Then came the snake — albeit in three pieces — on Instagram, sending fans into a tizzy. And finally, the announcement.

What started out as a social media blackout has instantaneously flared into excitement and anticipation. Following a brief hiatus, Swift burst back onto the music scene. The star announced a new album titled “Reputation” out Nov. 10, all while dropping a new single, music video and record-breaking lyric video in only a few days. The single, titled “Look What You Made Me Do,” was profoundly anticipated by fans after its announcement on Aug. 23.

The cover of her new album features Swift in black and white — a stark contrast to previous album covers — the edge and title clad in newspaper print. “Reputation” hints that Swift aims to take back what’s hers and reinvent herself as an edgier, more rebellious artist.

“Look What You Made Me Do” is the first single from the album, released Aug. 25. Much like the cryptic snake posted on Swift’s social media accounts, the lyrics come out venomous.

In very pointed and direct lyrics, Swift calls out everyone she’s ever feuded with and attempts to get revenge through music, a style typical of Swift. As fans and critics decipher the lyrics, some believe “Look What You Made Me Do” is about Kanye West and Kim Kardashian — specifically the “Famous” feud. Swift’s snake on social media points cryptically to past reactions to her feuds, and Swift’s voice recording at the end of the song and references to a “tilted stage” only provide proof on the subject matter.

Cynically, Swift sings, “I don’t like your perfect crime / How you laugh when you lie / You said the gun was mine / Isn’t cool, no, I don’t like you” and “But I got smarter, I got harder in the nick of time / Honey, I rose up from the dead, I do it all the time,” describing her backstory and comeback over synth beats. The chorus chants the title, “Look what you made me do,” eerily reminiscent of Right Said Fred’s “I’m Too Sexy” — don’t worry, the band received writing credit.

In the second half of the song, Swift sings, “The world moves on, another day, another drama / But not for me, not for me, all I think about is karma.” In her truest form, Swift strives to get even through music, and this song is no exception.

While I love Swift and have been an avid fan of hers since the “Love Story” days, I can’t say I’m a fan of “Look What You Made Me Do.” At the end of the song, Swift says through a telephone-style voice recording, “I’m sorry, the old Taylor can’t come to the phone right now / Why? Oh, ‘cause she’s dead.” While Swift is considering this new phase in her career a reinvention of herself, I don’t think it’s as much of a revamp of her “reputation” as she claims it is. Swift is already famous for writing songs about exes and enemies and getting revenge through music, but this time she goes about it much more cynically with a slightly different, darker dance-pop style.

The difference between the first single from her previous album “1989” and “Reputation” proves to be evidence of Swift’s evolution. “Shake It Off” poses a confounding difference to “Look What You Made Me Do.” She goes from singing about shaking off what the haters say and moving past the drama, to resurrecting it.

In my opinion, “Look What You Made Me Do” didn’t live up to its vehement hype. Swift’s first single off her new album had the opportunity to bring the heat, but it fell disappointingly short. While it’s not a complete revolution, “Look What You Made Me Do” is certainly catchy, and — as a fan — I have faith. If I’m a good guesser, I think her upcoming album will surely be a hit in both the hearts of fans and music billboards. In one section, Swift sings, “I don’t trust nobody and nobody trusts me / I’ll be the actress starring in your bad dreams.” After listening to the first single from “Reputation,” her antagonists should know one thing for certain — don’t mess with Taylor Swift.
Perfectionism is both a gift and curse for many artists. The trait tormented Kanye West enough to have several “Life of Pablo” songs undergo post-release revisional edits. It forced Tame Impala’s Kevin Parker to take over every creative position in his band — producer, arranger and songwriter. Perfectionism plagues the production of The War On Drugs. Singer-songwriter Adam Granduciel takes a similarly demanding approach to recording music. But the result is a brand of heartland rock that’s as evolutionary as it is casual.

“A Deeper Understanding,” released last Friday, is the band’s latest continuation of this evolution. And like 2014’s “Lost in the Dream,” it’s a near-perfect record. Synths and pianos take a firmer hold on the sound of “A Deeper Understanding,” but as its name suggests, the record further explores the essence of classic rock.

First-time listeners of The War On Drugs may be quick to point out its mid-1980s doppelgangers. Granduciel’s voice carries the unmistakably rough drawl of Bruce Springsteen or Bob Dylan. Instrumentally, The War On Drugs’ songs always provide an easily accessible, guitar-heavy groove. This is dad-rock inspired music — pure and simple.

But it’s the deviations from these influences that have lent the band a firm critical and commercial foothold. Lyrics about young love, cars and Christianity are replaced with themes of introspective loss, drug use and existential grappling. The War On Drugs isn’t the second coming of Springsteen, but rather the next evolutionary step in roots rock.

Ethereal guitar tones are aided by a louder bass guitar in “A Deeper Understanding.” The synth and piano parts in particular add a steady pulse to each song. For “Holding On,” it provides the song with a backbone for the other instruments to shine.

Lyrically, Granduciel continues to explore the fractured state of his mind and behavior. In the song “Pain,” he sings, “I resist what I cannot change / And I wanna find what can’t be found.” This disconnect between desire and need is a crucial thematic concern in The War On Drugs’ music.

“A Deeper Understanding” revives “Lost in the Dream” at almost every level. Though they differ in energy, “A Deeper Understanding” is undoubtedly a more mature and defined work. With it, The War On Drugs continues to shape the modern trajectory of rock music.

CONTACT  Drew Cowen at cowends@dukes.jmu.edu. For more on the culture, arts and lifestyle of the JMU and Harrisonburg communities, follow the culture desk on Twitter @Breeze_Culture.
By HARRY HOLTZCLAW
The Breeze

The last time head coach Mike Houston and the Dukes were on the football field, they hoisted the program’s second FCS National Championship in school history. As they prepare to open the 2017 season, JMU’s ranked first in the STATS FCS Preseason Poll, with a core group of returning players that have their sights set on a repeat. However, JMU will have its hands full when it opens 2017 play with FBS opponent East Carolina University on Saturday.

1. Playing on the big stage

Senior quarterback Bryan Schor will love playing in front of ECU’s more than 40,000 fans come Saturday night to kick off the season. Schor has been at his best when playing under the spotlight, as he threw 12 touchdowns at his best when playing under the lights of Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium in Greenville, North Carolina, to take on the Pirates.

2. Ground game

Replacing a STATS FCS Player of the Year for any school is never an easy task. But now that Khalid Abdullah has graduated, the Dukes have to do just that. Luckily, the running back depth of JMU is arguably the most exciting aspect of the defending champions.

JMU brings in Georgia Tech junior transfer Marcus Marshall, who ran for over 1,200 yards and eight touchdowns during his two years with the Yellowjackets.

“I’ve been waiting for this day since I got here in January,” Marshall said. “I get a lot more space and freedom as a running back in this offense.”

Marshall’s father, Warren Marshall, holds JMU’s all-time rushing yards record (4,168) and will be in attendance at his son’s first game as a Duke.

3. Containing ECU’s athletic offense

The last time JMU faced an FBS opponent — UNC in 2016 — speed and athleticism was a headache to defend. The Tar Heels from last season, they have some good speed that helped post an average of 467 yards per game in 2016.

“They are pretty athletic and we need to match up,” redshirt senior Raven Greene said. “Once we fall into the scheme into the game and settle down, we will be fine.”

Greene was recently named to the HERO Sports Preseason All-American Team. After losing Justin Wellons and Taylor Reynolds to graduation, JMU’s defensive backs have big shoes to fill and will immediately be put to the test against ECU’s talented seniors in Jimmy Williams and Quay Johnson.

4. Next-man-up mentality

Although the Dukes return the bulk of their offensive and defensive line and quarterback, there are many holes to be filled. With Rashad Davis, Brandon Ravenal and Khalid Abdullah departed, Schor has less weapons to work with. In addition, senior tight end Jonathan Kloosterman and redshirt senior wide receiver Terrence Alls have been suspended for violation of team rules. The two combined for 12 touchdowns in 2016.

“I like our group of receivers; they have had a good preseason camp.” Houston said. “They’ve put a lot of effort into this season and this is a bright moment for us and East Carolina.”

Filling one of those wide receiver holes could be Ishmael Hyman. The redshirt senior hasn’t played much in the past, but has shown glimpses of explosiveness in past seasons.

“I’ve watched him develop over the years here and I’m excited for him to get his shot and surprise a lot of people,” Schor said.

The Dukes and the Pirates will kick off at 6 p.m. on Saturday and it will be broadcast on ESPN3.

CONTACT Harry Holtzclaw at holtzchw@dukes.jmu.edu. For more football coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.
JMU field hockey prepares for deep playoff run

By DANNY SCULLY
contributing writer

JMU field hockey is set to make a push at another deep run this upcoming season. The team was picked to finish second in the CAA in the 2017 preseason coaches’ poll. The Dukes ring in the new season ranked No. 19 by the National Field Hockey Coaches Association due to a strong core of returning players and successful 2016 campaign.

"The team’s goal this year is to bring home a national championship trophy," senior midfielder Hannah Hall said. "Everyone is really excited to show off after all of our practices and we cannot wait till the season starts."

Head coach Christy Morgan echoed Hall’s belief that the Dukes are well prepared to win the CAA, and are a more complete unit than they were in previous years.

"Our goal is to turn around a three-year losing skid at the CAA championship game and to have another strong season," Morgan said. "It’s key to keep players excited and keep the momentum strong and energy levels up."

The Dukes have added five new players to bolster their roster: midfielder Mattea Harris from Auckland, New Zealand, midfielder Phoebe Large from Virginia Beach, Virginia, goalkeeper Caitlin Nelson from Denver, Pennsylvania, forward Marina Rupinski from Monrovia, Maryland and midfielder Rachel Yeager from Middletown, Pennsylvania.

While JMU’s roster flashes formidable veterans, Morgan will also look to her younger players to contribute heavily in games.

"I believe all these girls are great additions to our team and I believe they give us an even better chance to win," Morgan said.

In addition to its domineering play on the field, JMU field hockey has also been recognized for its success in the classroom. Eight Dukes have been recognized for academic excellence by the NFHCA.

The Dukes took down Old Dominion on Wednesday, 3-2 in a shootout. They return to action Friday at 4 p.m. at home against Appalachian State.

CONTACT Danny Scully at scullydcs@dukes.jmu.edu. For more field hockey coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.
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Who really holds the single-season home run record?

By MATT WEYRICH
The Breeze

There aren’t many feats in sports more impressive than the home run. Muscling a baseball over a wall 400 feet away using nothing but a piece of wood is just as difficult as it sounds, yet more and more players these days are doing it.

One player in particular that’s mastered the art is Giancarlo Stanton, an outfielder for the Miami Marlins who just hit his 51st home run of the season Tuesday night. The 6-foot-6-inch, 250-pound power hitter is the owner of the richest contract in the history of American sports — a testament to the caliber hitter he is.

Stanton’s on a quest to set the all-time record for most home runs in a single season. However, as simple an idea as that may sound, the “real home run record” is up for debate.

In 1961, the Yankees’ Roger Maris hit 61 long balls, breaking the record Babe Ruth held for 34 years. Maris’ mark has been eclipsed six times by three different players since then, but all three stars have had their careers tainted with accusations of steroid use. Barry Bonds, Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa are three of the most prolific power hitters in the history of the game, but each have strong cases against them for cheating the system.

Bonds hit 73 homers in 2001, a year in which the MLB didn’t have a drug-testing protocol in place to catch steroid users. Many believe that since multiple players have accused Bonds of using performance-enhancing drugs, his record shouldn’t stand.

While allegations of Bonds’ steroid use are almost certainly true, there’s no way of proving that anyone else in the history of the game was any cleaner. Just as there wasn’t testing in 2001, there wasn’t testing when Maris broke the mark in 1961 or when Ruth set the initial one back in 1927.

Even players considered clean, like Hank Aaron, Mickey Mantle and Willie Mays — three of the greatest players in the history of the sport — all admitted to using amphetamines at some point during their careers. Ruth himself was even accused with trying to get an artificial edge by injecting himself with an extract of sheep testicles. Yes, sheep testicles.

Putting steroids aside, both Maris and Ruth have asterisks next to their 60-home run seasons anyway. Maris hit his 61st in a year when two expansion teams were added to the league, thrusting many pitchers into the majors who might not have been quite ready. Ruth hit his 60th before the sport was integrated with the Negro Leagues, preventing countless talented pitchers from ever facing the Babe.

You can believe what you want about the home run record, but the history books show Bonds with 73, and that’s not going anywhere. The Marlins have 31 games left on their schedule, giving Stanton a little over a month to pass Maris’ mark of 61. Just don’t call it a record.

CONTACT Matt Weyrich at breezeditor@gmail.com. For more sports coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.

Respect the record

By CONNOR MCCARTHY
The Breeze

As children, we’re taught basic lessons such as eat your vegetables, treat others the way you wish to be treated, don’t be a cheater and so on and so forth. We were also taught that there are consequences for our actions and oftentimes things are taken away from us as punishment. Why should baseball be any different? Why should players such as Barry Bonds, Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa be held above standard rules that have been ingrained in our society’s moral standards?

I say these players should be held accountable for their actions just as each of us should be held accountable for our own responsibilities. They should be stripped of their titles as home run kings and leave the record books to those who played the game fairly. That’s why I believe the single-season home run record was set in 1961 by Roger Maris at 61.

With Miami Marlins slugger Giancarlo Stanton hitting his 51st home run of the season on Tuesday it’s safe to say all home run records — tainted or not — are at risk. Stanton has a legitimate August, as his 17 home runs are tied for the most ever hit in the month. His home run pace has been so torrid that baseball fans and experts alike are once again debating the home run records. If you ask some of the top power hitters in the game what the single-season record is, you’ll often hear the number 61. Stanton said in mid-August that he believes the record of 61 is “legitimate.”

Chris Davis of the Baltimore Orioles once had similar buzz that he could break the single-season home run record in 2013. When asked about his possibility of breaking the record, Davis said, “In my opinion, 61 is the record, and I think most fans agree with me on that.”

I believe it’s important to the game of baseball that players like Davis and Stanton continue to honor 61 as the true record. As Bonds’ ridiculous 73 home run season in 2001 begins to fade from people’s minds, fans’ collective anger at the slugger for cheating may begin to dissipate. If 73 home runs is accepted as the single-season record, it’s a travesty to all those who play and love the sport of baseball. What message are we sending to young baseball fans if we accept 73 home runs as the record? That it’s never okay to use PEDs but those who used them are still the greatest players of all time?

With today’s random PED tests, it’s harder than ever for players to get away with cheating. That’s why Stanton’s season is so much more impressive than any season the “steroid era” produced. We should all sit back and enjoy watching a freak of nature in Stanton chase after a true record of 61.

CONTACT Connor McCarthy at mccartys@dukes.jmu.edu. For more sports coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.
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What’s Inside:

4 Offense
The Dukes’ prolific offense is poised for another big season.

5 Defense
JMU’s defense must learn from last year’s slow start.

8 Offensive Line
Two seniors must fill the void of graduated linemen.

11 Cardon Johnson
The running back returns from an Achilles injury.

13 Eldridge
A transfer wide receiver steps into the Dukes’ offense.
Despite the pressure of making the JMU student body have veered onto Exit 245 and returned to Harrisonburg, they’ve been met by the newly christened 2016 National Champions sign hailing from Bridgeforth Stadium to welcome them back to the Friendly City. With the opening kickoff against East Carolina University just days away, many fans and students alike have already been speculating whether the Dukes will hoist a new sign come season’s end.

During last year’s historic season, which saw JMU go undefeated in conference play to break the university’s single-season wins record at 14-1, the FCS champions set CAA records for scoring (700), rushing offense (4,125 yards) and total offense (7,612 yards). In a season that saw quarterback Bryan Schor pace the FCS in completion percentage (73.1 percent), yards per pass attempt (10.11) and pass efficiency (186.2) and yards per pass attempt (10.11) on route to being awarded CAA Offensive Player of the Year honors.

“We aren’t defending anything because the 2016 conference championship and the national championship can never be taken from us,” Kirkpatrick said. “We don’t have anything in 2017. We’re 0-0. So we’re not going out there like we’re trying to defend something, we’re going out there like we’re trying to earn it just like we did last year.”

The Dukes’ success starts with Schor’s cerebral approach to leading the offense. The CAA Preseason Player of the Year completed 217-of-297 pass attempts for 3,082 yards and 29 touchdowns with six interceptions last season. The quick quarterback also rushed for 569 yards and scored 10 touchdowns on 126 carries for a whopping total of 3,571 yards of total offense.

“Bryan Schor back at quarterback with the experience he has from last year has upgraded drastically from where we were a year ago,” Houston said. “He’s playing at a very, very high level. The biggest thing is that he has confidence in everything he’s doing on the field and he knows the offense inside and out. He’s kind of like a coach on the field.”

Despite Schor’s accolades, the Milford, Pennsylvania, native will need a little help from his friends to take his team back to the promised land. With the loss of Abdullah, who’s now a running back for the New York Giants after he broke the JMU single-season rushing records with 1,809 yards and 22 touchdowns last season, JMU will turn to a speedy core to fill the void.

“Khalid had a huge year, so filling his shoes is going to be hard, but we have the personnel to do that,” Kirkpatrick said. “Cardon Johnson has been injured — he had some surgery and missed all of the spring and most of the summer — but he’s working his way back in here and we know he’s very capable. I know he’s champing at the bit to get out here and have a great year. He sees Khalid in New York right now and knows he has that kind of ability.”

JMU has also added Georgia Tech transfer Marcus Marshall to its backfield. Marshall is the son of Warren Marshall, who was inducted into the JMU Hall of Fame in 2013 and stands as the university’s all-time leading rusher with 4,168 yards.

“Marcus has been a delightful guy since transferring here and has fit in so well,” Kirkpatrick said. “I think he’s very hungry to get out here and be a guy like that in this offense. He didn’t really enjoy the Georgia Tech offense, I think he just likes the James Madison atmosphere.”

Running back Taylor Woods, who ranked seventh in the CAA in yards per carry (5.6), and Trai Sharp will both see increased roles with the Dukes this season as they mix in with Johnson and Marshall.

“They have always responded when they got a chance, it was just they had to play behind some really talented players,” Kirkpatrick said. “You can’t play without a running back in this offense because we want to establish the run, so it’s going to take them all.”

While the running backs face the difficult task of replacing Abdullah, senior wide receiver and punt returner John Miller looks to replace a current NFL player himself. With Davis now a member of the Philadelphia Eagles organization, Miller will take over as one of Schor’s go-to receivers, which Houston believes he’s more than ready to do.

“If it’s a guy that any time he has the ball in his hands, he has the chance to make an explosive play,” Houston said. “He returned two punts for touchdowns last year, so it’s not like he’s never done it before.”

While Miller certainly has some big shoes to fill, his gritty style of play poises him for a breakout season. He has already shown his knack to step up in big moments, such as his recording of a career-long 45-yard catch in the FCS semifinal win at No. 1 North Dakota State last season.

“I just need to go out there and do what I do — be John,” Miller said. “Rashard was a great player and he had a great legacy here, so I’m just trying to go in and do my job and hopefully do what I can do for my teammates and my coaches — go out there and play smart.”

Along with receivers Ishmael Hyman and Riley Stapleton to complement Miller, JMU’s passing game shouldn’t skip a beat. While fans and members of the media will undoubtedly compare this JMU team to its predecessor, the team’s players and coaches have their sights on one thing: seeing students are greeted by a new National Champions sign at Bridgeforth come next August.

“You get what you earn,” Kirkpatrick said. “They’ve had a hard camp, we have pushed them to the limit. We have not let them feel like they have earned anything to this point right now, and I think they are really excited about going to play.”

CONTACT Sammy Criscitello at breezesports@gmail.com.

For more football coverage, follow the sports desk on @TheBreezeSports.
JMU Football 2017 Schedule

September 2
- East Carolina University, 6 p.m., Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium, Greenville, North Carolina

September 9
- vs. East Tennessee State University, 6 p.m., Bridgeforth Stadium

September 16
- vs. Norfolk State, 3:30 p.m., Bridgeforth Stadium

September 23
- vs. University of Maine, 1:30 p.m., Bridgeforth Stadium

October 14
- vs. Villanova University, 3:30 p.m., Bridgeforth Stadium

October 28
- vs. University of New Hampshire (Homecoming), 3:30 p.m., Bridgeforth Stadium

November 4
- @ Rhode Island, noon, Meade Stadium, Kingston, Rhode Island

November 11
- vs. Elon University, noon, Rhodes Stadium, Elon, North Carolina

November 18
- @ College of William and Mary, 3:30 p.m., Zable Stadium, Williamsburg, Virginia

JMU football enters the 2017 campaign fresh off a national championship, but it’s looking for even more improvement on the defensive side of the ball. While its play increasingly improved as the season went on, it was far from perfect through the first half of the season.

“When we got here, we inherited one of the worst defenses in the nation,” head coach Mike Houston said.

That very defense failed to record a sack in each of the first three games of the regular season and then allowed Delaware and William & Mary to combine for roughly 800 yards of offense in weeks five and six.

After struggling out of the gate, the defense turned things around in the second half. It finished the season with a nation-leading and program-best 21 interceptions while ranking fifth in turnovers gained (30) and eighth in turnover margin (1.13).

Looking at the front seven for the Dukes, Houston expects a lot from their two interior defensive tackles, redshirt senior Simeyon Robinson and senior Cornell Urquhart.

“They have done a great job with themselves, their bodies, the way they play their work ethic standpoint and from a vocal standpoint has been very important for us,” Houston said.

Looking at the team’s top sophomore, Robinson finished his junior year with 34 total tackles (17 solo) with 7.5 tackles for a loss and four sacks, while Urquhart complemented Robinson’s play with 37 total tackles (30 solo) with one tackle for a loss and three pass breakups.

JMU’s defensive talent has been recognized this preseason with several All-American honors distributed. Defensive lineman Andrew Ankrah was named to the STATS FCS Preseason All-American Second Team, while Raven Greene found himself on the HERO Sports 2017 FCS Preseason All-American Third Team. As a unit, the Dukes ranked as the top FCS team in Lindy’s Magazine Preseason Poll and received top three honors by Athlon Sports and Street and Smith College Football.

While there is obvious pressure on the Dukes to live up to last season’s success, Greene says the team isn’t letting itself get distracted by all the media hype.

“New year, new team,” Greene said. “Obviously we have the same goals, but we’re going to take it one game at a time.”

With the hopes of keeping preseason nerves to a minimum, Houston echoes this message to the team.

“We’re prepared for East Carolina and that’s it,” Houston said. “Anything past that is for the fans to worry about. We have goals to take it one game at a time.”

As Greene gears up for his final season opener in purple and gold, the safety anxiously awaits this week’s kickoff.

“I’m ready to go out and compete with these guys,” Greene said. “I could say we’re a pretty chippy group.”

With the defense poised to pick up where it left off in 2016, its improvement is recognized by the rest of the team.

“My favorite part about the team is that the guys around here are pretty selfless,” senior quarterback Bryan Schor said. “They give credit where credit is due to the rest of the team and that’s special.”

The Dukes will kick off their 2017 season on Sept. 2, when they travel to ECU for a nonconference game.

JMU has high praise for his senior safety in his final year of play.

“He’s the quarterback of our defense,” Houston said. “His leadership from a work ethic standpoint and from a vocal standpoint has been very important for us.”

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Leaders in the trenches

A.J. Bolden (61) and Aaron Stinnie (70) line up for a play against Villanova last season. The two helped the Dukes set JMU and CAA single-season records in scoring (700), rushing offense (4,125), total offense (7,612) and first downs (380). Stinnie was named as a STATS FCS First Team Preseason All-American, Athlon Sports FCS Preseason All-American and a Preseason All-CAA selection for the second time.
By MATT WEYRICH
The Breeze

The unheralded heroes of the gridiron spend most of their time on the field in the trenches, clashing with the biggest opponents in the opposing uniform while the playmakers work behind them. These heroes are offensive linemen, thrust into the spotlight when they make mistakes, but quickly forgotten once things begin to turn around.

JMU’s offensive line finished tied for sixth in the CAA last season with 20 sacks allowed — albeit it did play four more games than any of the teams that finished with less. However, graduated seniors Mitchell Kirsch and Matt Frank have both moved on from the program and left several much younger players to take their places.

Redshirt seniors Aaron Stinnie and A.J. Bolden are joined by redshirt senior Nick Edwards as the only offensive linemen on the roster — which currently holds 19 offensive linemen — with more than two years of experience under their belts.

“Our offensive line is extremely young right now,” Stinnie said. “It’s primarily freshmen and sophomores really, and it’s only three seniors up there. So it’s definitely a big responsibility, but it’s a great time.”

Now, it’s up to Stinnie and Bolden to fill Kirsch and Frank’s shoes. Both linemen will be relied on heavily to help guide their younger teammates.

“[Aaron] and A.J. both are fifth-year seniors, so they’ve been there, done that,” head coach Mike Houston said. “They have the experience. They know what it takes to play at a high level because they’ve been around a successful offensive line that went and did a lot of special things.”

Stinnie, who will start at left tackle this season, was named a STATS FCS First Team Preseason All-American — the highest preseason honor an FCS player can receive. He’s started all 27 games the Dukes have played over the past two years.

“He’s 300+ [pounds], but he’s light on his feet,” Houston said. “So that combination of being an athlete with that kind of size ... all those things together is what really makes him one of the best linemen probably in the country at the FCS level.”

Bolden, a guard, was a full-time starter last season for the first time in his career. The two are close friends both on and off the field, and both believe that their leadership styles complement each other.

“It’s a big responsibility on us,” Bolden said. “For me, I’m more of a person who leads by example. Stinnie, he has the keys to do it both ways. He can lead by example and he can talk. I kind of envy him for that a little bit. So I got to step my game up a little bit as far as coaching the younger guys up.”

The JMU offense looks like it has all the tools to be the prolific force that led it to a national championship last season. That success, however, begins and ends with the offensive line. Yet with training camp now winding down, Stinnie and Bolden are as confident as ever.

According to Bolden, all the group needs to do is “come together; we get our chemistry going so we can do the same thing we did last year, which is take it game by game, day by day, practice by practice” and they’ll be just fine.

CONTACT Matt Weyrich at breezeeditor@gmail.com. For more football coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.
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Cardon Johnson

On the road to repeat as NCAA FCS National Champions, head coach Mike Houston and company will rely heavily on their talented backfield. Redshirt senior Cardon Johnson missed the final six games of the 2016 season with an Achilles injury — including the national championship game — but he's back and ready to help the Dukes attempt to do something they've never done before.

"Cardon has looked really good," junior running back Marcus Marshall, a transfer from Georgia Tech, said. "He's back at practice with us, looking fast and explosive."

Johnson injured his Achilles during the Dukes' 47-43 win over the Richmond on Nov. 5. He returned to practice last week and showed his elusiveness from the first snap.

"I've worked hard in the training room, worked hard in the weight room to get back," Johnson said. "I've definitely worked my way back in camp and where I'm sitting right now, I feel comfortable with the abilities I bring in the backfield."

Johnson finished eighth in the CAA in rushing touchdowns and 10th in rushing yards despite only playing in nine games. He had three 100-yard rushing games, finishing the 2016 campaign with 704 yards on 114 carries. Johnson's dynamic ability in the backfield led to him averaging 6.17 yards per carry last season.

Johnson was a member of arguably one of the best backfields in the country last year, but they might be even more impressive this season. Houston brought in Georgia Tech's leading rusher in Marshall this offseason, creating yet another dynamic duo in the Dukes' backfield. Not to mention, they also have veteran backs Trai Sharp and Taylor Woods to help carry the load. Johnson is excited to see what this backfield can accomplish this season.

"The expectations are high," Johnson said. "We stick together. We keep moving in the right direction. With all of us being in the backfield, it opens up more of a dynamic in the offense. We can be more versatile with our formations."

There's nothing like ending your career as a champion, and that's what Johnson can do. With a full healthy season, teammates believe Johnson can break out not only as the best back at JMU, but also in the country.

"When Cardon catches the ball, it's really unbelievable how fast he gets down the field," senior quarterback Bryan Schor said. "It is definitely something that excites us and we are really lucky to have Cardon Johnson back."

CONTACT Kevin Haswell at breezesports@gmail.com. For more football coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.

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Dukes pick up another weapon

Add transfer David Eldridge to the list of playmakers at the disposal of the JMU offense

By KEVIN HASWELL
The Breeze

Coming over to JMU from the University of Virginia, wide receiver David Eldridge is ready to write the next chapter of his football career. The former Cavalier is now a member of one of the best transfer recruiting classes in JMU football history. His next chapter at JMU will last two seasons, as Eldridge comes in as a junior.

In his sophomore campaign at U.Va., Eldridge appeared in 11 of 12 games, making eight catches for 177 yards. Among those catches was an 84-yard reception against Pittsburgh, the 12th longest reception for a touchdown in school history. With the transfer to JMU, Eldridge figures to be a big piece in the Dukes' receiving corps moving forward.

Eldridge showed big-play ability at Virginia, which will help the Dukes this season. JMU lost its best deep threat in Rashard Davis, who signed with the Philadelphia Eagles in August. Even with the loss of receiver Terrence Alls to a four-game suspension, JMU's receiving corps is ready for a big year.

"Right now, I see myself fitting in well in this receiving core," Eldridge said. "We have a lot of fast guys on the perimeter that can make big plays down the field."

JMU head coach Mike Houston has high expectations for Eldridge in his junior season. "He's a player that brings another guy to the wide receiver room," Houston said. "He can go up and get the ball. He's a bigger body. He's got great hands. He's got great body control and I think he has big-play speed."

Eldridge has the ability to play all four receiving positions, but will mostly play in the X and Z positions in the formation. The X is the far outside receiver on the weak side of the formation, while the Z position is the outside receiver on the strong side of the formation.

"My coach, coach Dudzik, has me learning X, Y and Z so I can be used in many different ways," Eldridge said. "I've been working primarily in the X and Z though."

Through camp and preseason practice, Eldridge and quarterback Bryan Schor have melded terrifically. The communication and on-field chemistry between a quarterback and his receivers takes time to build, but Schor and Eldridge are confident in where they are at this point in the preparation for ECU.

"I feel really comfortable with David," Schor said. "We've had a pretty great camp so far and we are gelling pretty well right now. I only expect to improve on that the rest of this year."

Eldridge hopes to add a more impactful chapter to his football career at JMU. He'll have his first opportunity to shine on Sept. 2, when the Dukes head to Greenville, North Carolina, to take on ECU.

"I'm looking forward to starting this journey with this team," Eldridge said. "Hopefully we can get back to Frisco."

CONTACT Kevin Haswell at breezesports@gmail.com. For more football coverage, follow the sports desk on Twitter @TheBreezeSports.
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