



Come one, come all, to Darby

For the second time in three years, the tourney will be home

by Kevin Byrne
Staff Writer

"Texas Holdem, JEazzy, and Duder just won't let us lose," Paul Nordlund '06 said of this year's men's basketball seniors Jim Shaw, Jon Eckoff, and Zach Carlson.

It seems that nobody will let the Grinnell Pioneers lose this season, as they have won their last eight games and 11 of their last 12 to clinch their second Midwest Conference Men's Basketball Championship in three years with a 13-3 conference record. The conference title means that Grinnell will host this year's Midwest Conference tournament in Darby Gym today and tomorrow.

The single elimination tournament will feature the top four teams in the league, with Grinnell on top and Lawrence (with the second seed), Illinois College (third), and Ripon (fourth) all vying for the award of receiving an automatic bid to this year's Division III NCAA tournament.



Trey Raney '04 launches one from downtown in Grinnell's 118-98 victory over Illinois College last Saturday.

Lawrence and Illinois College will be the first two teams to face off on Friday at 5 p.m. During the regular season, these two teams split the two games they had against each other in very close contests, so this game figures to be a very competitive battle.

Grinnell plays Ripon College tonight at 7 p.m. in a game that should also be very competitive. These two teams also split their season series, both winning their home games.

"Ripon is considered by most people the most talented team in the conference," Matt Brown '05 commented. "They have very good guard play and are very athletic at the back of the press. But, playing in Darby, we are confident that we can beat Ripon, and whoever else we play."

If Grinnell does in fact beat Ripon, they will face off against the winner of the Lawrence and Illinois College game for the championship on Saturday at 3 p.m. For head coach Dave Arsenault

and many of the players, it does not matter who it is they have to play.

"If we happen to play IC," said Toby Carlson '06, "we feel very confident against the zone they throw at us. We had guys attack the basket and we were also able to move the ball around and find the open three-pointer. We have so many guys playing well right now, that we should have a pretty good chance of duplicating what happened this past weekend." Grinnell beat Illinois College 118-98 on the Feb. 22 to clinch the conference title. However, as is common of the Midwest Conference, IC won their home game against the Pioneers as well, 114-106.

If Grinnell faces off against Lawrence, a team it took the Pioneers three overtimes to beat in Darby in mid-February, the game should be very exciting.

"Lawrence is a tough match-up for us because their defense is solid and they have guards who

Photo by Leslie Boyadjian

don't turn the ball over," Paul Nordlund remarked. "However, I definitely see us winning this thing and advancing to the NCAA tournament."

A key for the Pioneers, as was a key for all the MWC teams this season, will be the home court advantage. Grinnell did not lose a single game at home this season, and the Grinnell faithful, the Sea of Red, will likely be raring to go.

"Playing in Darby is a huge plus," Coach Arsenault said. "Our fans have been second to none in the conference in both numbers and noise level. This has really helped us through some flat spots."

The rest of the team echoes Arsenault's feeling about having the tournament at home, knowing that MWC opponents are not too fond of having to come in and face the multitude of extremely "vocal" Pioneer fans.

"Being able to play in front of Grinnell fans is always good," Brown commented, "and we know they're going to get rowdy for the tourney."

Marie's favorite moments

Marie Opsahl-Lister '03's five favorite memories, in reverse chronological order.

5. 5th grade: While playing against her rival team, Marie was called for a foul, upon which her coach told the referee that he needed to clean his glasses. It was the first technical given in 5th grade rec league basketball.

4. Sophomore year of high school: Defeated her school's rival and was able to dominate the inside by repeatedly stuffing her opponent's post player.

3. Sophomore year at Grinnell: The last minute three point jumper by Mariah Hibarger '02.5 to defeat Knox at the buzzer by one point.

2. This year: After an epic game, finally beating Carroll in double overtime

1. Last Saturday: Winning her final college game, at home with all of her friends and loved ones in the stands.

Farewell to the cornerstone

For Grinnell's Marie Opsahl-Lister '03, a long career with a perfect ending

by Matt Dank
Staff Writer

V is for Victory and that's good enough for Marie. At home and with a win, Marie Opsahl-Lister '03 could not have thought of a better way to finish her college basketball career. After 13 years in the game, Marie has seen her fair share of highs and lows, with this latest victory topping the list of highs.

"I can't even say what it meant to me," said Opsahl-Lister. "The people I love most in the world were sitting in that gym." One of Opsahl-Lister's long-time friends (from the age of two) who had never seen her play basketball traveled from school to attend the game.

"There were points in my Grinnell career that I questioned my dedication," remarked Opsahl-Lister. "But ending my career with a victory made it all worthwhile."

Marie Opsahl-Lister originally moved from New York to St. Paul, Minn., when she was only nine years old. It was when she first moved to Minnesota that she was exposed to the game of basketball.

"My parents wanted me to experience the complete Midwestern life. I played volleyball, softball, soccer and basketball; I just had the most fun with basketball." Picking up the game in the third grade, Opsahl-Lister continued to play in high school, where her team met a lot of success.

"We were consistently second in our respective league. The only team that could beat us was the private school that was

placed in our league; they were allowed to recruit." Going from a team that was always at the top of their conference to Grinnell's less than consistent program must have been an interesting transition.

"I decided to take my freshman year off from basketball, because after coming so close in high school to winning our league, just to fall short, made me really burnt out on basketball." But Opsahl-Lister went to many of the women's games and realized that she missed basketball. And that it had been her choice to not play.

She asked coach Jenny Wood if she could come out for the team, received a yes, and was soon working out and practicing with the team in the pre-season of her sophomore year.

"I missed a team during that year off," stated Opsahl-Lister.

"Right away I fell in with the team's camaraderie and family atmosphere." But the losses wore down on her, because, truth be told, the point of any sports team is to win.

"It was so frustrating, because we care for each other so much that we wanted to win for our teammates more than ourselves."

But then came this year, and a lot of fresh blood to revitalize the team's energy and hopes.

"The freshmen came in with such high expectations," said Opsahl-Lister. "They all started off on the right foot and didn't have any history of failure as a team."

The other factor was new coach Andy Hamilton, and his dynamic and enthusias-

tic approach to the team.

"His enthusiasm was contagious, he expected us to do well."

New players plus a new coach multiplied by the veteran players desire to win yielded an equation for success. The team ended the year 10-11, and Hamilton was sure of one reason for the turnaround.

"Our success in women's basketball at Grinnell this season would not have happened without Marie," he said.

Now that her Grinnell College career is over, many are wondering what Marie Opsahl-Lister is doing next year.

"I need some time off from basketball," commented Opsahl-Lister. "I am moving to Madison, Wisconsin and am going to try writing for a while." Despite wanting time off from ball, Opsahl-Lister plans on returning to the court.

"I want to be an assistant coach at a Division II or III school. I grow too attached to the players and I wouldn't be able to bench certain players over others. I can't distance myself from friendship and coaching. Optimally I could get into a program where we could play good cop and bad cop."

Others agree.

"A kind and compassionate person," said Hamilton, "Marie's presence was most felt as she led our group of young players onto the court during our pre-season training, on each day of practice and for every game. She is a great communicator and has the ability to motivate or provide calm, and she thrives in whatever difficult situation arises."

"I want to thank those players who have been my teammates over these past three years," remarked Opsahl-Lister. "They are



Marie Opsahl-Lister '03 puts up a shot in a game against Lake Forest earlier this year.

Photo by David Kennedy

the ones who made it all happen. But I especially want to thank those seniors who graduated last year, I wish they could have experienced this turn around."

"I was thinking about them all during our game last night and today during our banquet."

It's a good bet that this time next year, the returning players will be thinking about Opsahl-Lister.



Youth will serve for men's tennis

Pioneers try to defend as conference champs; test at Luther Triangular tomorrow

by Jenni Niemiec
Staff Writer

When Grinnell won its first conference title since 1962 last spring, it was somewhat unexpected. If the Pioneers repeat, it will be with a very different cast.

This year's team has only two of last year's top six players returning. Half of the team's 12 members are first years, which adds a lot of potential to the team. The one thing that the team is lacking is experience. There will be about three or four first years in the lineup every week, so they should gain the needed college competition experience in a hurry.

"The most encouraging aspect of this year's team is the amount of talent," said Jim Finnessy '04, who after playing on last year's team knows talent when he sees it. "Right now, we've got a lot of young guys, and once they get some experience in college matches, we'll improve quickly."

Grinnell will learn a lot about itself in the early going. Four of its first six matches are against regionally ranked opponents, and after losing its first match on Feb. 16 against St. Ambrose, Grinnell is looking forward to the Luther Triangular which will be held tomorrow in Decorah, Iowa. It has been two weeks since the Pioneers competed last, and they are excited to play three matches against strong opponents this weekend.

The team has only been practicing officially since Feb. 1, but most of the members have been hitting and lifting on an individual basis since the fall. The Pioneers have been aiming to get physi-

cally fit to the extent that is necessary for college competition, incorporating many conditioning and strengthening exercises into their workouts. They also had matches to determine the lineup for the season.

After watching a month of practices, head coach Andy Hamilton likes his team's chances.

"There is no doubt in my mind," he said, "that our team will grow into one of the top two or three teams in the Midwest

Conference. We are definitely shooting to defend as the league's south division and overall champions."

The latter should be easier than the

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—Andy Hamilton

Young guns of Grinnell

The Pioneers may have finished fourth or better in the conference for seven years running, but there's few teams in the MWC younger than they this time around. Half the team was in high school a year ago, and there are only four upperclassmen. The lineup:

Boram Um '03
Chana Pongcharoenkul '03
Jim Finnessy '04
Tyler Katzenberg '04
Shina Abeygunawardana '05
Brij Patnaik '05
Nate Jones '06
Howard Johns '06
Julian West '06
Kushal Shah '06
Rick Fenbert '06
Peter Campbell '06