

Bearcat Reflections

Don Sears

SPORTS PLAYED AT NORTHWEST: Basketball and baseball

GRADUATED: 1970

MAJOR: Secondary physical education

MINOR: Health and safety, elementary physical education

SPORTS MEMORIES: I received three varsity letters as a baseball pitcher and four letters in basketball. I also held school rebounding and scoring records, and I received the conference sportsmanship award two seasons in a row. When I came to Northwest, the baseball team was in the rebuilding stages. Being from Des Moines, Iowa, I hadn't had a lot of travel experience. I remember I took my first plane ride when the baseball team was headed to play in California and in Las Vegas. We were a young team, but I remember the coaches were proud of how well we played.

SINCE GRADUATION: After graduation I moved back to my hometown of Des Moines and continued to focus on education, athletics and family. I was a teacher in the Des Moines Public Schools for 35 years, 19 of those at the elementary level. In 1986, I received my master's from Drake University. I have been married to my high school sweetheart, Sandy, for 35 years. We now live in Ankeny, Iowa. We have two adult sons who have carried on the athletic tradition. Ryan plays professional basketball in Holland, and Todd plays professional baseball for the Florida Marlins. My wife and I travel quite a bit to see them play.

CURRENT INVOLVEMENT IN ATHLETICS: I have spent many years coaching golf, basketball, swimming and baseball. I have enjoyed coaching because of the personal improvement it allows the players and the good memories I have of my sons playing sports as they grew up. ■



Don Sears, who was a standout on the basketball court (top) and on the baseball mound, has passed his athleticism on to his sons, one who plays professional basketball in Europe and another who's a first baseman for the Florida Marlins.

Tappmeyer, players receive postseason basketball honors

Northwest men's basketball sophomore forward Hunter Henry was named to the 2007 National Association of Basketball Coaches' All-South Central Region First Team and the 2007 Division II Bulletin All-America Fourth Team. Freshman Lance Sullivan was tabbed on the 2007 Division II Bulletin All-Freshman Team, while head coach Steve Tappmeyer was one of 29 coaches on the 2007 Division II Bulletin Coach of the Year list.

Henry finished the season tied for first in the MIAA in field goal percentage (.577) and third in scoring (17.6 ppg). The MIAA Most Valuable Player will enter the 2007-08 season on a 27-game scoring streak of more than 10 points – the second longest since the 1992-93 season. He owned nine double-doubles last season and scored a career-high 33 points against Washburn. Henry won MIAA Player of the Week four times, the most of any conference athlete.

Sullivan earned his honor after becoming the first Bearcat since 1996 to be the MIAA Freshman of the Year. The redshirt freshman ranked second on the team in scoring (11.4) and assists

(2.7), and his 52 treys was the most on the club.

Tappmeyer, who won his fourth MIAA Coach of the Year honor, took a team that was ranked fifth in league preseason polls to a share of the league title. Northwest was ranked as high as No. 11 in the NABC Coaches' poll and finished the year at No. 17. Participating in its 11th NCAA Tournament and seventh in the last eight seasons, Northwest won 20 games for the seventh time since the 1999-2000 season.

Northwest ended its season in the second round of the NCAA South Central Region Tournament with a 24-7 record. The Bearcats won their 11th overall MIAA Championship, sharing it with Central Missouri.

Northwest is expected to return 12 letterwinners and four starters. The team's first home game for the 2007-08 season is Nov. 16 versus Baker in the Ryland Milner Classic. ■



Northwest men's basketball coach Steve Tappmeyer and two of his players received much-deserved recognition for the Bearcats' stellar season.

Fall Classic returns for sixth installment at **Arrowhead**

The sixth annual Fall Classic at Arrowhead will kickoff at 2 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 6, in Kansas City.

The Fall Classic has been an indicator of MIAA supremacy in recent years – the Northwest Bearcats and Pittsburg State Gorillas have shared or won outright MIAA championships in 16 of the last 18 seasons dating back to 1989, and both have been ranked in the AFCA Top 25 in 12 of the last 13 meetings. This year proves to be no different with

Northwest and Pittsburg State being ranked in the top 25 of multiple preseason polls.



Tailgating, complete with green and white beads, delicious food and excited fans, is always a hit prior to the Fall Classic at Arrowhead. The Bearcats take on the Pittsburg State Gorillas on Saturday, Oct. 6.

Arrowhead Stadium parking lots open at 11 a.m. and the stadium gates open at noon. Parking is \$10 per vehicle.

All Bearcat alumni, family and friends are invited to the tailgate party hosted by the Northwest Alumni Association and the Kansas City Alumni Chapter. The party will begin at 11 a.m. and will be located in the tents adjacent to Lot M. There will be food, music and appearances from the Northwest cheerleaders and band.

Game tickets are \$25 for club level seats. Field level seats are \$20 for adults and \$10 for fans ages 3 through high school age as well as Northwest students with a University ID. Children 2 and younger sitting on an adult's lap are free.

To order tickets, call the Northwest Student Services Center at (660) 562-1212 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, or purchase tickets online at www.nwmissouri.edu/tickets/footballtix.htm. ■

2007 M-Club Hall of Fame **inductees**

The following individuals and team will be inducted into Northwest's M-Club Athletics Hall of Fame. The ceremony and banquet will begin at 6:30 p.m., Friday, Oct. 26, in the J.W. Jones Student Union Ballroom. Tickets are \$17 and can be purchased by contacting Michele Steinmeyer at (660) 562-1977.

CHRIS GREISEN '99

Quarterback; helped lead the 1998 national championship team to a 15-0 record; holds the conference record for yards passing in a season with 4,076 and touchdown passes with 38 in 1998; drafted by the NFL's Arizona Cardinals in 1999; currently plays for the Georgia Force in the Arena Football League.

KATHY KEARNS BEHOUNEK '98

Cross country and track athlete; first Northwest winner of State of Missouri NCAA Woman of the Year award in 1998; four-time All-MIAA and All-Region performer; school record holder in the 5K in cross country; earned cross country All-America status in 1996 and 1997.

RON "JESSE" JAMES '67

Wrestler; MIAA Champion and MIAA Wrestler of the Year in 1966 and 1967; holds the best career mark at Northwest at 74-8 in 152-lb. weight class; holds school

records for wins in a season (30), pins in a season (16), points in a season (116), career pins (37) and career points (300); finished third in 1967 NCAA Division II Tournament and sixth in 1966 tournament to earn All-America status twice; inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame in 2004.

RUSS MILLER (att'd. '76-'81)

Basketball; four-year starter; ranks seventh all-time in scoring (1,282 points), second in rebounding (837) and second in shot blocks (94); led the team three straight seasons in rebounding, including a 9.5 average in 1980; only Northwest player to have scored 1,200 points and collect 800 rebounds.

SCOTT SPURGEON '91

Baseball; All-America First-Team selection as a third baseman in 1988; two-time All-MIAA First-Team choice as a catcher in 1987 and third baseman in 1988; named MIAA Hitter of the Year and MIAA Sportsman of the Year in 1988; holds school records for single-season doubles (22), career (.872) and season (1.007) slugging percentage; drafted by the Houston Astros in 1988 as a first baseman.

1980 VOLLEYBALL TEAM

Won Northwest's first and only conference championship, an MAIAW crown; posted a school-record 52 victories, going 52-9 under Coach Pam Stanek; team's .852 winning percentage is a school record. ■



Quarterback Chris Greisen and Coach Mel Tjeerdsma celebrate a victory – one of 15 during the Bearcats' perfect 1998 season.

Dual-sport athlete focuses on national championship

At 5-foot-9 and 160 pounds, you wouldn't expect Kendall Wright to excel in a powerhouse football conference. But that's just what he's done.

The junior from Sulphur Springs, Texas, has buried all doubts regarding his small stature by proving himself not only as an offensive force on the gridiron but as a dangerous competitor in track and field.

Wright came to Northwest in the fall of 2004 because he wanted to be a two-sport threat.

Once on campus, Wright made an immediate splash in track and field, earning All-MIAA honors in his first full season by placing fifth in the 60-meter hurdles at the indoor conference meet and battling the first of many hamstring injuries to earn all-conference in the outdoor 110-meter hurdles.

Hamstring woes have continued to plague Wright, and he said constant injuries have affected his attitude about the sport.

"I think the hamstring injuries have weakened me," he said. "Injuries just got in my head and messed with it a little bit and made me feel differently about track."

While his passion for running and jumping has dwindled, his desire to play football has not. Wright has had the opportunity to perform on the biggest of stages in his two years as a Bearcat wide receiver, and he's eager for more of the same.

In 2005, the 'Cats, seeded sixth regionally, were supposed to fall in the first round. But the team exacted revenge on the skeptics by advanc-

ing past three MIAA squads and earning a spot in the national title game. Losing to Grand Valley State the following week didn't diminish the team's accomplishments in Wright's eyes.

"It felt special. We had a lot of great athletes, and we were the underdogs," he said. "The way we ended it, going from almost nothing to almost everything, was real special."

The following season, Wright's 83 catches for 1,151 yards led the team as the Bearcats returned to the title game. But the Grand Valley State Lakers defeated Northwest for a second consecutive national championship.

Wright, a second-team all-region selection as a sophomore, said the second loss was more difficult for him, and that he took personal responsibility for the defeat.

"For me, the last championship game was harder since I fumbled to possibly lose the game," he said. "We still were in it, and I still put the blame on myself."

Wright's focus on leading the Bearcat football team to a third Division II championship game remains his top athletic goal.

"My number-one goal is to get back to the national championship and win this time," he said. "I haven't been a leader since I got here, so I want to try and lead the team and just have fun and be with my buddies out on the field." ■



Kendall Wright (No. 4) celebrates with teammate Mike Peterson during last season's Homecoming game against Fort Hays State. Wright was the leading receiver for the Bearcats in 2006, finishing the season with more than 1,100 receiving yards.

Visit www.nwmissouri.edu/sports/football/ for more information about Bearcat football.

Acebado receives ITA Player of the Year accolades

Northwest tennis student-athlete Pablo Acebedo has been named the North Central Senior Player of the Year by the Intercollegiate Tennis Association. Acebedo was a unanimous selection at No. 2 doubles with sophomore Daniel Usieto on the All-MIAA First Team and was a three-time MIAA Athlete of the Week. He also earned Second Team All-MIAA accolades at No. 2 singles. Acebedo ended his career 10th in all-time doubles wins with 54. ■

Football team selects four captains for upcoming season

Four Northwest student-athletes have been named team captains for the 2007 football season. All four players are seniors, two each from the defense and offense.

The captains, as voted on by the team, are linebacker Jared Erspamer of Omaha, Neb., defensive end Dallas Flynn from Blair, Neb., running back Xavier Omon of Beatrice, Neb., and tight end Mike Peterson from Atlantic, Iowa.

"These guys are four excellent choices from a really good group of seniors," said Head Coach

Mel Tjeerdsma. "I feel good about our overall team leadership. These four, who have all started for at least two seasons, have a little more responsibility to represent themselves in games, practice and the preparation aspect."

The No. 2 Bearcats ended the 2006 season at 14-1 overall and had a second straight National Championship appearance. Northwest lost 13 seniors from 2006 but expects eight offensive starters and five defensive starters back in 2007. ■