Bison Build New Foundation

By Brian Mulligan

The men’s crew team has grown leaps and bounds over the past two years under the guidance of Head Coach Paul Bugenhagen. When he took over the team, it was a floundering program with little interest from the University community, but his drive and commitment to excellence have developed a national championship-winning squad.

Last spring, the novice eight beat some of the top boats in the nation at the prestigious Dad Vails regatta held on the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia to be named the top novice boat at the event. The boat consisted of Kells Green ’10 (coxswain), Kyle Lafferty ’10 (stroke), Dan Elies ’10 (7), George Rockett ’10 (6), Zach Etzel ’10 (5), David Ross ’10 (4), Chris Ostman ’10 (3), Zach Konsin ’10 (2) and Byron Garoufalis ’10 (bow).

“We work all year long for that one weekend of racing. We were prepared mentally and physically for the race and it showed all weekend long,” Bugenhagen said.

“Not only are our guys physical and tough, but they’re mature racers who raise their level under the pressure of big events.”

The minute the Bison hit the water they set a precedent for all of the other squads, winning their first heat and posting the top time across the board of 6:13.18 over the two-kilometer course. In the semifinal, the Orange and Blue topped their previous time, crossing the finish line in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5
2007 was a year of Bison rowing that will never be forgotten. This was the year when the men’s rowing program at Bucknell won its first Dad Vail championship. The Dad Vail regatta has been the season ending championship for almost every generation of Bison oarsman and it is widely considered the small college and club national championship for rowing. On May 12th, 2007 the Men’s Freshman 8 from Bucknell University won the Lev Brett Bowl and became the first Dad Vail champions in the history of men’s rowing at Bucknell.

This fall I began my third year as the head coach of men’s rowing at Bucknell. Over the last 2 years with the support of their families and alumni these rowers have built a program of growing national prominence in a very short amount of time. The athletes in this program are inspired by the obstacles overcome by their predecessors and committed to keep driving the standard of excellence higher every year. I am proud to be their coach. With the championship as our backdrop our team started the 2007-2008 campaign with tremendous excitement and vitality.

Our fall campaign was quickly filled with significant challenges and while our competitive spirit wasn’t satisfied we filled our time with hard training and preparation. Our motto this fall was “any mile is a good mile”. That said we rowed a lot of miles this fall. We worked primarily on technical development and building a really deep base of aerobic capacity. This work has paid off with some really strong erg scores this winter. Our team’s current performance scores are ahead of last year’s squad and give us motivation to keep grinding through the winter.

We might not be the most skillful crew when we return to the water in the spring, but we will be the most physical group on the water. My teams pride themselves on the obstacles they overcome and the toughness and courage that success cultivates within them. When we arrive at the race course in the spring it’s going to feel like releasing caged animals. The Herd will be moving by late March 2008 and I can’t wait to see our guy’s race at the season opening Murphy Cup. I hope to see all of you there.

On behalf of the team I would like to thank all of you who actively supported the team through this fall, and all of the Bison Nation for your constant support throughout 2007. We wish all of you a safe and happy holiday season.

GO BISON!!!

BCA Campus Updates

BCA Executive Meeting after the Erg Armageddon on February 10, 2008

BCA 25th Reunion October 3, 4 and 5th More Info Coming Soon
I Owned The Dream

By Ben Finio

Four years. That’s how long Bucknell Crew dominated my life. Not dominated in a bad sense – dominated meaning it was my primary passion, it was what I lived to do. When people ask me what I do at Bucknell, I don’t tell them that I’m an engineer – I tell them that I row. Actually, I just realized that having graduated, that sentence should be past tense – something that I’m still not used to. I rowed at Bucknell.

Academics before athletics, yes. Technically. Homework, projects, tests and the all important GPA come first. Academics before athletics, yes. Technically. Homework, projects, tests and the all important GPA come first. Academics before athletics, yes. Technically. Homework, projects, tests and the all important GPA come first.

Bucknell prides itself in its nationally recognized student-athlete graduation rate. Certainly not a school for dumb jocks whose professors let them slide because they’re good at a sport. If academics are more important, why, then, is rowing the first thing that comes to mind when I think of Bucknell? I definitely spent far more hours locked away in the depths of the engineering building than I did at the boat house or in the erg room. Sure, I learned a lot in class and I’ll probably get a decent job because of it. But I didn’t meet my best friends at Bucknell in Physics 211. My best memories aren’t from the Dana Engineering Building. Engineering didn’t change my life. Rowing did.

I told myself I was done with competitive sports after high school. In college I’d go to the gym and work out on my own time – no coach yelling at me to go harder, telling me what to do. That was my plan, at least. Until I walked into the Activities Fair at the field house and saw a table for Men’s Crew. I knew absolutely nothing about rowing - I didn’t even know the seats moved, I thought you just used your arms. But why not check it out? Can’t hurt. I approached cautiously – I’d been told by every tour guide that engineering was a lot of work – would I have time to be an engineer and do a sport? Did I really want to have practice every day? They talked me into going to the interest meeting. That led to going to the first practice. I never looked back.

I’ll never forget my first stroke. I was two seat in the King. We shoved off the dock, and coach Derek Updegraff said “OK Finio, we’re going to teach you to row nad quick here…” I almost panicked. Nobody had warned me that it was two seat’s job to row away from the dock after shoving off. But I did it. I put the blade in the water, pulled through, and the boat moved. I had no idea what I was doing, but it worked.

I was having fun, but I wasn’t hooked yet. That didn’t happen until my first race. 6k at home against Lehigh. I was in the novice B boat – the slower 8 out of 16 of us. We had no idea what we were doing – rowers were looking out of the boat, screaming at each other, randomly deciding to call out power 10’s on our own instead of waiting for the coxswain. But somehow, we hung onto the stern of Lehigh’s B boat the entire time, just enough for me to see them out of the corner of my eye. The intensity, the screaming, the splashing water, the sheer exhilaration – I’d never felt such an intense adrenaline rush in my life. I was hooked.

It’s a cliché, but the next few years were a blur. Different coaches, painful workouts, some races won, most races lost. I’ll spare you all the details and fast forward to my senior year.

New coach, new training program, a team that was gaining speed and had nowhere to go but up. My erg scores were already faster than I even knew was physically possible as a freshman, and getting faster. We had a small group of varsity guys that had survived the trial-by-fire of the previous year, and the most promising freshman class in recent memory. The team meant everything to me by that point.

With no assistant coach, as captain I picked up a lot of the administrative work during the summer when Paul wasn’t on campus. I probably spent more time planning recruiting activities in August than I did working my research job. It was worth it.

The season was by far the most successful of my four years of rowing. We went into races not just hoping to avoid losing, but aiming to win. “Win at all costs” is a completely different mentality than “Just don’t get last”. We’d finally reached that point. In the varsity four we dominated opponents like Lehigh and Army that we’d previously considered untouchable. I think I won more races this year than I did in the previous three. But the biggest success of the season came from the Novice 8.

Admittedly, I was definitely living vicariously through them when they won Dad Vails. Rowing up to the medal dock in Philly had been my four-year dream. I’d progressed from being eliminated in the heat, eliminated in the rep, and making it to the semi-final – but never the medal dock. It was a bittersweet victory for me – ecstatic that they’d won and that they were living my dream – but disappointed that I couldn’t experience it myself. In the coming years they’d be better than I ever dreamed possible – but I was graduating, I couldn’t be there to experience it directly. As much as I wanted to hold on, I had to let go.

I’ll never forget the last image that I have burned into my mind. Passing the finish line at Dad Vails, gasping for breath and trying not to collapse. Drifting slowly under the bridge, then CONTINUED ON PAGE 6
By Ian Monk

Crew, what’s crew? My high school never had a crew team, so naturally crew was unknown to me until about the end of my sophomore year. My cross-country coach first exposed me to the idea of crew, during one of his many speeches about hard work, determination, and excellence, by talking about one of last year’s seniors and her success on Trinity’s crew team. That was the first time the idea of crew was planted into my head.

After having success my senior year in swimming I thought that if I didn’t get on the swim team I would turn to crew. Well as it turns out getting into a D1 swim team was a little harder than I thought, so I soon reverted to crew. I was so excited to begin training I couldn’t wait for summer to end, in retrospect this may have been an error of judgment on my part, because soon after trying out for the team, I learned how much pain really goes into erging. And to prove my point even further the freshmen team to my best recollection started out with about 50 guys and now only 18 remain.

That first week of erg practices, seemed so hard back then with 1 minute sprints and guys puking up the Caf’s fine cuisine. I’m sure the freshmen now would find those work outs terribly easy compared with today’s 6K time trials. But as freshmen we triumphed over evil, aka the ergs, and showed we had potential. After finally getting onto the water and learning the basics we began tearing things up, the only problem was we lacked the technique to really move the boats. So we basically flailed around like chickens with our heads chopped off.

I really feel bad for what we put coach through, him having to teach us what we learned the previous day because we couldn’t remember that day what it was that he had taught us. But with a lot, notice the stress on a lot, of practice, we finally proved we could move the boats to coach’s liking. Finally we were ready to race the nation’s best crew teams, but the team had some setbacks and the fall racing had to be cancelled.

It was disappointing to the freshmen having never raced before, but at the same time it was a chance for us to remain anonymous in the rowing community, and come out in the spring kicking ass and taking names. So we soon moved onto the winter session where already at the mentioning of erging groans fill the air, and when coach mentions a certain 6k test there’s certainly a hint of fear mixed in. But as a freshmen team waiting as a bull waits penned up for so long, waiting to finally be let loose and cause sheer and utter destruction to the so called “elite” crew teams, we have practiced harder and faster than we could have imagined. And we know that our erg room unlike Princeton, Yale, and Brown’s erg rooms is a place that is best related to that of Azkaban, if you’re a Harry Potter fan you’ll understand what I’m talking about, but for the rest of you deprived people it’s a place where all joy and life is sucked out of your soul.

Our erg room is hotter than hell and filled with about as much color as an empty dorm room. But that doesn’t stop us from “being the hammer,” and taking what we can get out of every erg practice. That’s perhaps why with all the hardships that this year’s freshmen team has faced, our motto best describes us no longer as freshmen but as a team that never retreats, never surrenders.
5:59.9. Their time was once again the fastest in the field and was good enough to beat out teams from Georgia Tech, Cincinnati, UC Santa Barbara, and a Canadian school Brock University.

The Bison entered the final as the breakout team of the regatta, but had the formidable test of beating out some of the best boats in the nation including Delaware and SIRA champs, St. Joseph’s University. The team stepped up to the challenge, winning the event in a time of 6:08.9 and making history for the men’s crew team.

“I remember saying to the guys, ‘Five more strokes and you’re going to win the Dad Vail.’ And then we did,” Green said. “It’s hard to describe the feeling of over five thousand fans cheering you on as you cross the finish line first.”

Even more amazing is that all of the men in the championship boat had never been in a boat before the fall of their first year in Lewisburg. With determination and commitment, they learned the sport and became one of the top boats in the nation within just a year.

“I attribute our success in the spring to our complete ignorance of the sport and to Coach Paul,” Etzel said. “None of us had ever rowed before. We had no knowledge of the sport or its culture. Surprisingly, that gave us confidence and a fearlessness that helped us win races.”

The team will use their championship win at Dad Vails as a springboard to compete at a new level during the 2007-2008 season, but will no longer be unknown by the rowing community.

“Winning a national title paints a huge target on your back, and everyone in our program is wearing that target this year. Competing against a championship squad always brings out the best in your competitors. Our guys understand that and are intent on denying anyone the satisfaction of finding a successful performance when we’re in the race.”

The Bison Men racing away from Delaware about 150 meters from the finish line.

paddling quietly around the bend – I looked up, and saw the lines of buoys on the race course disappear slowly around the bend, along with my competitive rowing career. The journey from that first scrambled race against Lehigh to the last one in the semifinals of Dad Vails is one that I’ll never forget. A journey that some of my best friends made with me. From timid, out-of-shape novice who could barely hold an oar to (arguably) highly-tuned, efficient, fearless varsity rowers.

From losing races by 30 seconds to winning by open water. In between I made some of the best memories of my life. Not just the races – the friends, the practices, the socializing, sitting around in the cafeteria avoiding doing homework. I even met my lovely girlfriend of two years at Erg Armageddon because she needed a partner in the mixed doubles event – no joke.

The racing may be over for me, but I still have the friends and the memories. I fully intend to keep rowing recreationally, and I’ll be at every race I can get to screaming myself hoarse. Even when everyone I know has graduated, I’ll still be there cheering on the Bucknell boats. That’s why I think of rowing first when I think of Bucknell – it made a permanent, lasting impression on my life. So to everyone who has helped out our program in the past – thank you. To everyone still on the team – good luck.
rowing coach and he was instrumental in the summer of 1987 in coaching the four+ of Bob Cullen’87 (bow), Mike Cunningham’88 (2), Steve Rocheleau’88 (3), Mark Lagatta’87 (stroke), and Monica Lawton (cox). These five good, hard-nosed, dedicated oarsmen stayed in Lewisburg to row together and compete at a higher level than in the regular season. They lived together and trained together all summer. They raced just about every weekend during this summer, traveling to Boston, Buffalo, Indianapolis, Philadelphia, and St. Katherine Canada. A picture of this crew finding their rhythm on the race course at US Nationals can be found at the top right of this page. This crew went to Indianapolis to row in the Nationals, to the Canadian Henley, and to Boston. These guys had a great summer winning some qualifying heats and placing in the finals. This was a fine boat, and an obvious example that BU men’s crew had come along way in four years. Through this crew the program was embarking upon the next level of competition and this boat helped spread the name of BU men’s crew beyond the waters of the Susquehanna.

Rowing has been a great source of fun, camaraderie, and knowledge for Mark. He still believes in stepping into the boat with an attitude that demands a will to row through some people and make them eat your wake. That’s when you breakthrough physically and spiritually and that’s what makes the sport truly special.

GO BISON!!!

The above left photo is of BU Men’s Crew first Head of Charles race in fall of 1984. Photo taken on the Charles River near Harvard’s boat house.

Cox: Doug Shiffler
S: Mark LaGatta
7: Lance Fritz
6: Tadd Kenyon
5: Tim ?
4: Kevin Rooney
3: Randy Leavitt
2: Chet Hein
B: Andrew Spence

The last time Mark Lagatta wore the Blue and Orange as a Bucknell oarsman was 1987. That tank top, last worn at the Canadian Henley in St. Kitts at his very last Bucknell race in the summer of ’87 is one of many keep sakes that Mark has to keep him tied to the Bison rowing program.

Mark came to Bucknell from Belmont Hill in Boston, Ma in the fall of 1983. As a high school rower he had a good knowledge of what it took to be successful and found himself leading many of the boats he rowed in from the stroke seat. He, Randy Leavitt, and a few other committed guys became the bedrock that our program has been built upon.

During his four years at Bucknell the program benefited from having a coach by the name of John Creighton who rowed for Ted Nash at UPenn and PennAC and was on the national team. Mark credits him with ratcheting up the Bucknell rowing program because he knew what he was doing. Then, John Skotedis coached the crew toward his junior and senior years, and frankly I think all of us can appreciate John’s tremendous impact on the program.

John Skotedis was Mark’s last
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Please make check payable to Bucknell Mens Crew and mail order form to:
Office of Mens Crew  
Department of Athletics and Recreation  
Bucknell University  
Lewisburg, PA 17837

Additional contribution to Bucknell Mens Crew  
Enclose a separate check; $__________

Email address: __________________________
WE WOULD LIKE TO Sincerely THANK EVERYONE WHO HAS SUPPORTED THE TEAM THIS YEAR

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Lafferty, Bill & Kelley P’10  Lebda, Douglas ’92 & Tara ’94  Ritchie, Steven ’97

Gold Medal Club ($5,000 - $9,999)
Ritchie, Alan & Jane P’97  IAC Foundation Inc., FRND

Silver Medal Club ($2,500 - $4,999)
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Butler, Brent ’96  Finizio, Benjamin ’07
Den Beesten Collins, Sara ’96  Grill, Joshua FRND

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Keep the Flywheel Turning

Bucknell Men’s Crew is currently enjoying tremendous success as our team aspires to become one of the elite programs in the country. We have been able to develop through the generosity of our alumni, parents, and our current rowers and their families. We remain in a pivotal time in terms of financial resources for the program as we are looking to make the next step in our development.

- We need to purchase a trailer so we can travel with our entire squad and all of our equipment. Its time to be independent of the women’s team.
- We need another boat so we have enough seats for our enthusiastic freshman coming into the program next fall.
- We need a second coaching launch so our assistant coach can work with the freshman team independent of the Head Coach and the Varsity.

To continue our march to the top we need consistent financial support and assistance for the program from all our alumni. Last year I set a goal of having 60% alumni participation in our fundraising. We missed that mark and held steady at 33% participation. This is a great way to reconnect with the program and with your former teammates. Please take a moment to consider how you can make a contribution of either money or time, or both so we can make Bucknell Crew amazing, but we can only do this together, as one big Team.

There are a variety of mechanisms you can use to support the team in addition to writing a personal check. If all supporters of the program were able to donate between $25 and $50 a month, we would be in a position to help current and future generations of Bucknell rowers realize their dreams. Please take a moment to choose the method that works best for you.

**Credit Card Donation:**
- Easy and convenient way to make a contribution that effects the future of Bucknell Crew
- Minimal impact on your finances, incredible impact on our program

**Corporate Match/Personal Business Donation:**
- A greater tax benefit for you and your business
- If your employer has a match program, please consider utilizing it in order to make a stronger contribution to the program

Make your checks out to Bucknell Men’s Crew and send them to:
Office of Men’s Crew
Department of Athletics and Recreation
Bucknell University
Lewisburg, PA 17837

For more information on donating via your credit card contact
Ron Marquette at (570) 577-3559 or ron.marquette@bucknell.edu.

In addition you can always contact Paul Bugenhagen at (570) 577-1069 or pab031@bucknell.edu.

As always, I appreciate your consideration and your continual support as we build Bucknell crew into a truly impressive program that all of us may share and be proud of.

Office of Men’s Crew
Department of Athletics and Recreation
Bucknell University
Lewisburg, PA 17837