

# Post-Season PROWESS

By John Seitzinger



**BASEBALL TEAM  
POWERS UP  
LATE IN SEASON  
TO CAPTURE TITLE**



Pitcher Tom Buckler earned most valuable player honors for the Freedom Conference Tournament. ALL PHOTOS BY WARREN RUDA

**T**he Wilkes baseball team found itself behind the proverbial eight ball after opening Freedom Conference play with a 3-7 record.

However, the Colonels rallied to win seven of their final eight conference games to reach the playoffs. Then they swept all three games in the conference tournament to claim their first conference title since 1994 and first NCAA Division III bid since 1978.

“We put our own backs to the wall, and then we caught fire. The team played great under pressure,” explains 12-year head coach Joe Folek. “This was not a very vocal, rah-rah type of team. Our guys didn’t say much during our streak. They just got back to playing good, old-fashioned, hard-nosed baseball.”

The Colonels ended the year with an overall record of 24-12 and won 14 of their final 17 games. They opened the conference tournament with a 4-3 win in 11 innings over top-seeded

DeSales University. The Wilkes bats then came alive in a 17-8 victory over number-two seed King’s College in the winner’s bracket final. In the championship game, junior Tom Buckler, named the tournament’s most valuable player, pitched a complete game four-hitter to lift the Colonels to an 8-1 win over DeSales and the conference crown. Buckler was also the winning pitcher in the Colonels first win over DeSales.

The Colonels placed four players on the All-Conference team, including junior outfielder/pitcher Kyle Follweiler. Follweiler, who was also the MAC’s Defensive Player of the Year in football last fall, hit .370 during the season to lead an offensive attack that hit at a .294 clip. Junior third baseman Chris Mayerski, junior outfielder/pitcher Corey Helfrich and junior outfielder/pitcher Brad Woznisky were named to the second team. Folek picked up the conference’s Coach of the Year award, a title he also collected in 2002.

# Fall Season Forecast



Al Karaffa begins his fourth year as starting quarterback.

## Football Adds Rival Rowan to Regular-Season Schedule

The Wilkes University football team defends its Middle Atlantic Conference championship this fall. The Colonels come off a perfect 10-0 regular season and an 11-1 record overall.

“Our team is anxious to face the challenges of the upcoming season,” says head coach Frank Sheptock. “A more difficult schedule and the graduation of an outstanding senior class will make this season a true test to our program.”

That schedule includes the addition of Rowan and Montclair State universities to regular-season play. Rowan blasted the Colonels’ playoff bids in both 2005 and 2006. This fall, they meet at 1 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 15, at Ralston Field.

Sheptock, who was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in July for his standout performance as a linebacker at Bloomsburg University, welcomes back six All-Conference players from a season ago. “Our players understand the commitment and work ethic it takes to reach a championship level. We need to take a very ‘blue collar’ approach to our preparation, and play with the pride that this program was built on through many great players and teams.”

## Women’s Tennis To Defend Title

With five of six singles starters returning, expectations are running high for the 2007 Wilkes women’s tennis team. Under the guidance of head coach Chris Leicht, Freedom Conference Coach of the Year in 2006, the Lady Colonels posted an overall record of 18-2 last fall, winning their first Freedom Conference title and earning their first NCAA Championship bid.

Sophomore Xiaoqiao Zhang headlines the list of returnees. Zhang earned conference Player of the Year honors after posting a 19-2 singles record and winning the MAC number-one singles title. Junior Alison McDonald joined Zhang on the All-Conference first team after compiling a 17-3 singles record out of the number-two position. Singles player junior Kristin Wilt was a second team All-Conference selection last season, registering a 15-4 record in individual play.

“I am very excited for the upcoming women’s tennis season,” Leicht explains. His biggest challenge will be integrating freshmen with upperclass players. “I have a strong recruiting class coming into Wilkes, and they will be ready to challenge for varsity positions. I would like to emphasize our doubles play. I feel this is one area we can improve upon.”



Junior Alison McDonald joined the All-Conference first team after compiling a 17-3 singles record.

## Field Hockey

A more experienced field hockey team takes the field this season. The Lady Colonels return all but one player from last year’s squad, which posted a 9-9 record.

Says head coach Sara Fuller, “With our talented veterans and a strong group of incoming freshmen, I am excited to see how the season unwinds. This year, our main goal will be playing a full 70 minutes intensely, and supporting each other in all positions on the field.”

## Women’s Soccer

Women’s soccer welcomes its largest team in history. “We have 20 newcomers, including 11 recruited freshmen, six walk-ons and three other current Wilkes students. This will be an exciting team,” promises head coach John Sumoski.

The team looks to build on last season’s 13-6-1 overall record. “We have continued to schedule nationally competitive teams,” Sumoski notes. And fitness standards are significantly more difficult than in the past.

## Men’s Soccer

With three All-Conference players returning, the men’s soccer team is eager to begin the new season. The Colonels went 12-6-1 a year ago.

“We graduated eight seniors from last year’s team, including four-year, all-conference players in the goal, central midfield and forward positions,” says head coach Phil Wingert. “That group will be difficult to replace in one year, but the current, senior leadership is excellent, and there’s a strong nucleus of returning players from last year’s playoff team. The incoming group of new players should complement the returnees.”

## Volleyball

With five starters returning, the volleyball team is anxious to begin the 2007 season.

Junior Katherine Harrington leads the group after registering a team-high 290 kills a year ago. Also returning are senior Kristen Linhart, who had 255 kills and 291 digs; sophomore LeeAnn Searfoss, who added 151 kills and 51 assists; senior Katherine Simons, who contributed 116 kills; and sophomore Julie Page, with 95 kills.