

Athletics

WOMEN'S SOCCER

The women's soccer team successfully defended its Great Lakes Valley Conference (GLVC) championship and advanced to the NCAA tournament. The Rangers (18-2) hosted an NCAA regional and defeated Grand Valley State 1-0, marking the first time in the program's history that it captured an NCAA tournament victory. The Rangers dropped a 1-0 decision to Ashland in the regional final. Five Rangers earned first team all-conference honors and head coach Troy Fabiano was named GLVC coach of the year for the second straight season. Stefanie Strauss became UW-Parkside's first All-American in women's soccer. She also earned the GLVC Scholar Athlete of the Year award. Goalkeeper Abbigale Wild posted the lowest goals against average in the nation at 0.30.

MEN'S SOCCER

The UW-Parkside men's soccer team (13-4-3) notched its 21st consecutive winning season under head coach Rick Kilps. It was also the 20th time in 21 seasons that the program has been nationally ranked. The squad finished in second place in the GLVC and qualified for the NCAA tournament, reaching the regional finals. Defender Riley Mewes became UW-Parkside's 46th All-American in men's soccer. Mewes also earned the GLVC Scholar Athlete of the Year award. Goalkeeper Victor Perez, who finished second in the nation in goals against average (0.52), was picked as the league's freshman of the year.

CROSS COUNTRY

The Ranger women's cross country team won its fourth GLVC championship in the last five years. Head coach Mike DeWitt captured his fifth GLVC Coach of the Year award since the Rangers joined the league in 1995. Michelle Boldon finished second at the conference meet in a time of 22 minutes, 34 seconds for the 6000-meter course in Alexandria, Ky. The Rangers finished fourth at the NCAA regional meet, and qualified for the national meet where they finished 19th.

The UW-Parkside men's cross country team, coached by Lucian Rosa, finished in third place at the GLVC meet. Cal Kromm led the way, finishing third in 25:48 for the 8K course.

VOLLEYBALL

The women's volleyball team completed its second season under head coach Nichole Roethig. The 2004 squad logged a 12-17 overall record and finished seventh in the GLVC. The Rangers played their best volleyball at the end of the season, winning seven of their last 12 matches. Lindsey Jones, who made first team all-conference, was among the league leaders in hitting percentage (.309).

ATHLETICS HALL OF FAME

JAMES R. BEZOTTE – WRESTLING '90-'95

Jim Bezotte's wrestling career blossomed at UW-Parkside where he earned five All-American honors including two national championships. As a senior, Bezotte ('95 English) won back-to-back heavyweight national championships over a nine-day span – one in the NCAA national championship tournament and one in the NAIA national championship tournament. Since Bezotte's back-to-back titles, no collegiate wrestler has won two national titles in the same year.

Bezotte is one of only five UW-Parkside wrestlers to earn All-American honors in each of his four years of competition. Following his senior season, Bezotte wrestled in Russia on an NAIA cultural exchange team. Bezotte is a graduate of Kenosha Bradford High School. He lives in Kenosha with his wife, Jennifer, and stepdaughter, Kennedy. He owns a home repair company, Extra Hand.

JAMES S. FERRARO – MEN'S SWIMMING '76-'80

Over his four-year collegiate career, Jim Ferraro ('80 life science) earned All-American honors twice and swam in four national championship meets. Primarily a sprinter, Ferraro broke 14 school records in both individual and relay events. As a junior and senior, he was undefeated in 27 dual meet races in the 50 freestyle. He was undefeated in 36 dual meet races as a freshman, junior and senior in the 100 freestyle. Ferraro achieved a career record of 52-2 in the 100 freestyle.

Ferraro is a graduate of Kenosha Bradford High School. He earned a Ph.D. from The Chicago Medical School and is an associate professor in the Department of Physiology at Southern Illinois University Carbondale in the School of Medicine. In recognition of his service to his community and career, Ferraro was the recipient of the UW-Parkside Distinguished Alumnus Award for Outstanding Achievement in 1997. Ferraro and his wife, Jeanne, are raising sons Michael, 18, and Nicholas, 16.

JASON J. GOULD – MEN'S SOCCER '91-'94

A central defender, Jason Gould ('94 biological science; '99 business) was a key member of the defensive unit that allowed less than one goal per game in 27 games including 40 shutouts. As a senior he was a critical component of the 1994 defense that finished the season ranked first in the nation. Gould's individual honors include being named the UW-Parkside most improved player in 1992, a two-time NCAA All-American (1993 and 1994), a two-time NCAA All-Region team member, a two-time UW-Parkside captain, and a two-time UW-Parkside defensive player of the year.

After his career at UW-Parkside, Gould played professionally for the Milwaukee Wave of the NPSL from 1995 through 1997. Gould attended Kenosha Tremper High School. He and his wife, Sarah Bristol-Gould, live in Park Ridge, Ill., where he is self-employed as an information technology staffing specialist.

DON KOPRIVA – HONORARY MEMBER, SPORTS INFORMATION DIRECTOR '71-'82

Three weeks after graduating in 1971 from Michigan State University with a bachelor's degree in journalism, Don Kopriva joined UW-Parkside as the school's first sports information director (SID). During his years, the athletic program grew quickly from six men's sports to 10 men's and six women's sports. He was heavily involved with the development of UW-Parkside's role as host for NAIA and NCAA championships in cross country, fencing and wrestling. Kopriva, who attended York Community High

School in Elmhurst, Ill., left UW-Parkside in 1982 to become men's SID at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. From there he became associate director of press operations for the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee and managed the main press center with 2,000 staff members hosting 8,000 journalists. He's covered or officiated at more than 100 Big Ten Conference championships, 37 Drake Relays and more than 70 NCAA championships. In 2003 he was named one of the "legends of cross country" in an event sponsored by Purdue University.

Kopriva currently serves as vice president and editor of The Business Ledger, a new suburban newspaper in Oak Brook, Ill.

CINDY RUFFERT – WOMEN'S BASKETBALL AND SOFTBALL '80-'84

A three-sport athlete at UW-Parkside, Cindy Ruffert ('84 sociology) played four years of basketball, four years of softball and one year of volleyball. In basketball, Ruffert started all but two games during her four years. Her pinpoint passes created three records that still stand 20 years later: career assist record of 675; most assists in a game with 16; and most assists in a season with 204. Ruffert was selected to the NAIA All-District 14 team in 1982 and was team captain for three years.

In softball, Ruffert played right field all four seasons on a team that made four consecutive national tournament appearances finishing as high as fifth. She was selected to the WWIAC All-Conference team in 1982 and the NAIA All-District team in 1983 and 1984.

Ruffert attended Milwaukee Hamilton High School. She lives in Kenosha and directs the College for Kids program in the UW-Milwaukee School of Continuing Education.

CHRISTOPHER A. RYAN – MEN'S SOCCER '89-'93

Chris Ryan ('93 communication) was the pillar of stability on the men's soccer team providing leadership as both a midfielder and defender. He started 62 of the 75 games, scoring 221 goals (including six game winners) and making 21 assists. In 1991, Ryan was named UW-Parkside defensive player of the year, team captain, and was selected to the National Soccer Coaches Association of America All-Mid-

East Regional first team. Ryan, who attended Granite City Senior High School in Granite City, Ill., was again named team captain and was selected as the Rangers' MVP in 1992. After graduation, Ryan played professionally in Europe starting for the Emden BSV Kickers in the German Regionale League. The next year, he returned to the United States to play for the Milwaukee Rampage.

Ryan lives in Springfield, Ill., where he is the athletics director and men's soccer coach at Robert Morris University.

WENDY SACKMAN – SOFTBALL '85-'90

Wendy Sackman ('90 political science) started at second base all four of her collegiate seasons. With her diminutive stature, opponents would often misjudge her ability. However, with quick hands and feet, she covered the entire right side of the infield. At the plate, she hit with power and was very capable of hitting the long ball. At the time of her graduation, Sackman held the career extra base hit record with 65, a career .311 batting average, a .472 slugging average and a .368 on base percentage.

Sackman participated in three NAIA national championship tournaments with the team finishing as high as fourth. She was twice selected to the NAIA National Tournament All-Tournament team, twice selected as a first team NAIA All-American, twice selected to the NAIA All-District 14 team, and once selected NAIA national player of the week.

Sackman lives in Corona, Calif., where she works for The Home Depot as a divisional manager for loss prevention and logistics.

BRENDA VANCUICK – WOMEN'S BASKETBALL '87-'91

Brenda VanCuick ('91 business) was a four-year starter who was always a threat to steal the ball. Lightning quick, she is fourth on the UW-Parkside scoring leaders chart with 1,188 career points. While VanCuick was a Ranger, UW-Parkside teams had a prolific scoring offense setting the average season scoring record of 77.0 points per game. In recognition of her accomplishments, VanCuick, who attended Hortonville High School in Hortonville, Wis., was selected to the NAIA All-District 14 team twice in her collegiate career. In her junior year she was

also named the NAIA District 14 player of the year and an NAIA All-American.

After graduation, VanCuick went on to set records in the Women's Professional Football League (WPFL) playing for the Wisconsin Riveters and the Northern Ice.

VanCuick lives in Kenosha and works for the city of Kenosha as a firefighter. She received her juris doctor degree in May 2004 from Marquette Law School specializing in sports law.

Women in Athletics

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and it's probably because of the success that we've had," Weir said. "People are starting to be interested because we're doing so well."

Using the phrase "because we're doing so well" is not necessarily a mistake. As the final seconds ticked off the clock in Michigan, Weir no doubt realized that while it might be her final competitive basketball game for quite some time, the Rangers would keep going. The first NCAA Division II tournament appearance, Weir believes, is just one of many positive steps for a team that will always be her team.

Individually, however, there will be fewer opportunities for Weir in competitive basketball. "There's really not much for women – as far as a basketball player – after college," Weir said. "It's not as easy as for the guys. There's the option of overseas, which a lot of talented girls can do, but for me I'm not thinking about it at all. After playing for ... how many years ... I'm going to take my break and enjoy it."

For more than half of her life, Weir has competed in track, volleyball, softball, and basketball. It's basketball that is her favorite. "(Basketball) is more exciting," she said, "there's more action, there's more – ya' know – I've just always had a love for the game."

So, on a court in Michigan a successful competitive chapter of Weir's life came to a close. Not really, it just changed.

She'll graduate in May with a sport management major and a certificate in coaching. It seems safe to say that basketball will always be a part of Weir's life. After all, she has a love for the game.