



The Dolphin Digest

January 19, 2006

SPECIAL EDITION: MEN'S VOLLEYBALL PREVIEW ISSUE

2006 SCHEDULE:

| DATE: | OPPONENT: | TIME: |
|-------|-----------------------------------|------------|
| 1/19 | at Hunter | 7:00 p.m. |
| 1/25 | at Polytechnic | 7:00 p.m. |
| 1/28 | SUNY NEW PALTZ | 7:00 p.m. |
| 1/30 | MEDGAR EVERS | 7:00 p.m. |
| 2/2 | at Yeshiva | 7:30 p.m. |
| 2/4 | YORK | 7:00 p.m. |
| 2/7 | at Ramapo | 8:00 p.m. |
| 2/10 | at Nazareth College Tournament | TBA |
| 2/11 | at Nazareth College Tournament | TBA |
| 2/15 | at New Jersey City University | 7:00 p.m. |
| 2/18 | BARD | 2:00 p.m. |
| 2/20 | at Baruch | 7:00 p.m. |
| 2/24 | NAZARETH | 7:00 p.m. |
| 2/28 | RAMAPO | 8:00 p.m. |
| 3/4 | at Stevens | 11:00 a.m. |
| 3/4 | vs. Lees-McRae (at Stevens) | 1:00 p.m. |
| 3/6 | POLYTECHNIC | 7:00 p.m. |
| 3/9 | CCNY | 7:00 p.m. |
| 3/11 | STEVENS | 12:00 p.m. |
| 3/18 | at SUNY New Paltz | 2:00 p.m. |
| 3/21 | YESHIVA | 7:30 p.m. |
| 3/23 | NEW JERSEY CITY UNIVERSITY | 7:00 p.m. |
| 3/25 | at Bard | 2:00 |

New look Dolphins seek to keep tradition strong

By Mike Spinner – Sports Information Director

Tom Callahan has always been the type of coach who keeps his cool under pressure. His ability to coach under fire led to his development as one of the top High School volleyball coaches in New York City, leading Salesian High School to three straight Catholic High School Athletic Association (CHSAA) Championships during the last three years, and developing a program renowned for its production of some of the top volleyball talent within the five boroughs. It was his success at Salesian, and his ability to handle the toughest challenges on the volleyball court that sometimes make the difference between success and failure, that led to Callahan's decision over the winter to seek coaching prosperity at the College level. But if the challenge of making the transition from High School to College volleyball was not enough to handle, he chose to do so at one of the finest Men's Volleyball institutions in the nation during a season which could easily be classified as a rebuilding campaign.

In other words, the pressure is on. Mount Saint Vincent finished the 2005 season ranked #12 in the nation by the American Volleyball Coach's Association (AVCA), and advanced to the Championship Game of the ECAC Metropolitan Tournament. The Dolphins have spent more than a decade as a national volleyball power, advancing to the Northeast Collegiate Volleyball Association (NECVA) playoffs every year since 1995 except 2001, winning the Championship in 1997 and 1998. Over the years, there have been All-Americans, a treasure trove of conference awards, and the constant possibility of Men's Volleyball bringing the first-ever national championship to the College of Mount Saint Vincent ... and now Callahan faces the task of keeping the tradition alive, and even taking it further.

But Callahan is taking the challenge in stride, and stresses the importance of honoring the tradition the Mount Saint Vincent Men's Volleyball program has established by taking it a step further – something he thinks the 2006 team can do if it continues to display the Spartan work ethic and team unity he has observed during his first month on the job.

"It hasn't been difficult to gain a sense of the tradition that those who came before me established at Mount Saint Vincent. It's something the team made me aware of, and something they are very proud of," Callahan said. "A big part of the reason why I wanted this position is because of the excellent tradition Mount Saint Vincent has established in volleyball, and I want to carry the tradition forward."

Callahan readily admits that repeating past success and then increasing it will be a challenge at Mount Saint Vincent this season as it is indeed a new era, a new era that has little to do with the hiring of a new coach. Gone from the Dolphin line-up is perhaps the single greatest varsity athlete in Mount Saint Vincent history as Phil Gallagher has graduated after literally writing the Mount record book. During four dominant seasons in Riverdale, Gallagher amassed more than 2,000 kills, 500 digs, 300 total blocks, and 250 service aces. He was Mount Saint Vincent's first two-time All-American in any sport, and was voted Player of

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|------|--------------------------|------|
| | | p.m. |
| 3/31 | NECVA Tournament | TBA |
| 4/1 | NECVA Tournament | TBA |
| 4/7 | Molten Tournament | TBA |

2006 ROSTER:

| # | Name | Year | Pos |
|----|---------------------|-------|-----|
| 1 | Mark Anthony Basa | Soph. | L |
| 5 | Russell Butts | Sr. | MB |
| 7 | Christopher Herrera | Jr. | MB |
| 8 | Marcus Frederic | Jr. | OH |
| 9 | Chris Dotoratos | Fr. | L |
| 11 | Martino Cecere, Jr. | Jr. | OH |
| 12 | James O'Connell | So. | MB |
| 15 | Arnold Ross | So. | OH |
| 19 | T.J. Pufahl | Fr. | OH |
| 20 | Mark Patricio | So. | L |
| 23 | Daniel Williams | Jr. | OH |
| 24 | Michael Steele | So. | MB |
| 32 | Matthew Reinhardt | Jr. | S |

HEAD COACH: Tom Callahan (1st Season – Iona '98)

the Year by the NECVA a year ago. Gallagher literally carried the program on his back a year ago, and his absence leaves a major void in the Mount Saint Vincent line-up. But Callahan admits that while filling Gallagher's shoes may not be possible, the void he leaves could become an opportunity for others to become the next great Dolphin.

"Without ever having coached Phil Gallagher, I could tell the type of leader he was and influence on this team because there has been no harping on the fact that he is gone. Some teams couldn't handle losing such a talent, but I think our guys see Phil's graduation as an opportunity to step up and make a contribution. We're optimistic, we're confident, and we believe that we can repeat our past success if we continue to work the way we're working," Callahan said.

Not only is the Mount optimistic as a team, but they are also young. With only one senior on the roster, and a line-up chocked full of what Callahan calls, "raw talent," the rebuilding process might not be a long one as Callahan said he sees bright days in the very near future.

"I feel good about this team," Callahan said. "This is a group determined to succeed. There is a lot of heart, every player is scrappy, and there is a commitment to playing together as a team that you don't see all the time. This team genuinely likes playing volleyball with one another, and I think as the season progress it is going to show up on the court. Of course there are things we need to improve on if we're going to succeed, but at the same time a lot of the intangibles are there to make 2006 a success."

Callahan said he feels he has strengths at every position that could very well make the 2006 season a success.

SETTER:

Callahan enters the 2006 season with only a single setter on the roster, but he said his setter is good enough to handle the workload he is about to receive as junior **Matthew Reinhardt** (Staten Island, NY/McKee-SI Tech) has begun to blossom in his role as a team leader. Callahan said that Reinhardt has all of the attributes to be one of the top setters in the NECVA before he graduates, and the 2006 season brings with it high expectations for Reinhardt. During the 2005 season, Reinhardt was among the nation's leaders in assists (962 – 11.06 per game) mainly by feeding passes to Gallagher, but this season his role has changed as he must lead an offensive attack with no single focal point.

"Matt has stepped up to be an integral part of this team. He has made the new guys feel comfortable, and takes care of a lot of the little things off of the court. He is very much a coach on the court, and I think he is a solid setter as well," Callahan said. "Matt brings to the court a very good understanding of the game, and his knowledge leads to smart decisions out there. We have a lot of hitters trying to develop their games this season, and having a setter like Matt is going to allow their development to happen faster than it would in other circumstances. I am excited to have Matt, and I think his game is going to blossom during the next two years."

OUTSIDE HITTERS:

With Phil Gallagher gone, three young outside hitters are filling the void, and provide the Mount with options on their attack that were perhaps not present a year ago when Gallagher was the go-to guy. Callahan said he thinks that registering kills is not going to be a problem for this team as he has both stability and depth in his outside hitters.

Leading the way is junior **Dan Williams** (Brick Township, NJ/St. Mary's). Williams had high hopes for a breakout year in 2005 before his season was cut

THE DOLPHIN DIGEST:

The Dolphin Digest is the official Athletics Newsletter at the College of Mount Saint Vincent.

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short by a knee injury suffered during the first two weeks of play. Now playing at "90%" according to Callahan, Williams is poised to finally have the season he has been waiting for.

"Dan definitely sees the losses to graduation as a chance to be a team leader. He has a ton of talent, and I expect he is going to register a tremendous number of kills this season. If we have a go-to guy, it is Dan, and I think he is ready to thrive in this role. We have him for two seasons, and I think the sky is the limit for how far he can go during that time," Callahan said.

Williams is joined on the outside by sophomore **Arnold Ross** (Wilton, ME/Mt. Blue), who finished fifth on the team last season with 65 kills, and second on the team with 144 assists. Callahan said that Ross, like Williams, should develop this year as a top offensive presence.

"Arnold has really stepped up his game. I think he sort of felt like a back-up last season, even though he was a starter. This year he is going to be a key guy for us on the outside, and I think when you look at how versatile and how scrappy he is, it's easy to see that he is going to be a major player for us for a long time to come. He's doing everything we're asked of him, and I think Arnold is about to have a tremendous season."

Speaking of young talent, joining Williams and Ross on the outside is an outstanding freshman who could be a Rookie of the Year candidate in the NECVA. **T.J. Pufahl** (Bethpage, NY/Bethpage HS) comes to Mount Saint Vincent with volleyball experience at both the High School and Club level. At 6'4". Pufahl is a combination of size, quickness, and strength that has Callahan excited.

"T.J. is going to be a special volleyball player here," Callahan said. "He has a lot of ability to put down the ball, and he makes great decisions considering how young he is. He is going to contribute right away, and I think he'll put up some great numbers."

Providing depth on the outside will be junior **Marcus Frederic** (Flushing, NY/Holy Cross), who is playing volleyball for the very first time, but Callahan said you wouldn't know it by watching him play. A Soccer standout, Frederic has bypassed the typical learning curve for volleyball, and Callahan said he will contribute right away.

"Marcus is a unique athlete with a lot of potential," Callahan said. "I don't think I've ever seen a volleyball player learn as fast as him. Marcus has progressed in two weeks what it takes two years for most others to progress, and his athleticism, soft hands, and desire to learn makes him somebody we'll be able to count on every match. He has tremendous upside and is going to be a big help for us."

MIDDLE BLOCKERS:

Callahan said the key for a championship caliber volleyball team is a commanding presence in the middle, and he has that covered with the addition of senior **Russell Butts** (Long Beach, NY/Long Beach HS) to the line-up. The 2003 NECVA Rookie of the Year, Butts had a solid 2005 campaign with a team-leading 1.29 blocks per game, and 1.49 kills per game to go with it. The team's lone senior, Callahan said he expects a lot from Butts both as a presence in the middle on the court, and a leader off of the court.

"Russell is doing a great job. He's a great blocker and a big, commanding presence in the middle. He'll be our strongest defensive player, and his ability to put the ball down gives us a lot of options on offense," Callahan said. "He's also a valuable leader as our only senior. Russell is a tri-captain with Dan Williams and Arnold Ross, and I think we have incredible leadership from all three. Russell is clearly looking to make his senior season special, and is doing all of the right things to reach that end."

Butts is joined in the middle by two newer players who will provide the Mount with quality depth at middle blocker. Sophomore **James O'Connell** (Elmont, NY/Holy Trinity) and junior **Chris Herrera** (Flushing, NY/St. Francis Prep) are athletes who have excelled in other sports (Herrera is a soccer player while O'Connell is a lacrosse player), and are using their athleticism to develop into outstanding volleyball players. Callahan said that both are currently in a platoon situation for playing time behind Butts in the middle, but they both are quickly evolving into excellent volleyball players considering their lack of experience with the sport.

"They're both consistently improving," Callahan said. "They're both very athletic and learning quickly. They'll close the defensive gap we have on the second line, and I think as they improve defensively they'll be able to help us out more and more. I'm anxious to see which one steps up and develops into our top guy in the middle behind Russell."

LIBERO:

Mount Saint Vincent is at its youngest at the Libero position, but in a strange twist of fate, Callahan is also perhaps most comfortable with that position. Freshman **Chris Dotoratos** (Bronx, NY/Salesian) will take over that role after starring for Callahan at Salesian High School during the last three seasons. Callahan said that he is thrilled to be able to continue coaching a key cog in Salesian's three straight CHSAA Titles.

"I think this is exciting for both of us," Callahan said. "We were something like 38-1 together at Salesian, and Chris was the all-time assist leader in Salesian history as our setter. He is more suited for libero in college, and I think he is going to be terrific. He's scrappy and plugs our holes on defense. He is amazing at reading the block and getting the dig, and I truly think that when all is said and done, he will be well known all across the NECVA as one of the very best liberos anywhere."

Backing up Dotoratos are two younger players, who Callahan said are working tirelessly to improve their craft. Sophomores **Mark Anthony Basa** (Bronx, NY/Cardinal Spellman) and **Mark Patricio** (Yonkers, NY/Iona Prep) will both see time at libero and offer the Mount both depth and determination in the key defensive position.

Overall, Callahan said that he could not ask for more from his first collegiate team in that he has talent in every position, depth, and a team attitude that he said is going to win a lot of matches for the Mount. He said that what the team lacks in experience will be made up with grit, and he thinks the team will improve tremendously as the season moves along.

"I don't think this team could possibly practice harder than it does every day, and ultimately that makes a tremendous difference when you have a group as young as ours. We need to improve the strength of our offensive attacks and I'd like to think we could be more effective with our blocks, but at the same time I think we are ready to start the season, and I think we are going to be a lot of fun to watch. This is going to be a very exciting season for Mount Saint Vincent volleyball, and I believe this team is already continuing the great tradition the program has established by working as hard as they do and as a team the way they're doing it." Callahan added.