

2004 WOMEN'S LACROSSE OUTLOOK

Stanford Women's Lacrosse looks toward New Horizons

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For many collegiate women's lacrosse programs, capturing six consecutive conference championships would be something that most aspire to accomplish. For the Stanford University women's lacrosse team and fourth-year Head Coach Michele Uhlfelder, it's a starting point.

Under Uhlfelder's guidance, the Cardinal has posted an overall record of 38-16 (.704), and has become the first west coast team to garner a top 20 national ranking. Since becoming a varsity sport in 1997, the Stanford women's lacrosse team has developed from a good team, to most recently, one that can compete with any of the perennial east coast national powerhouses.

In 2003, the Cardinal took another tremendous step forward, finishing with a 14-4 overall record, despite facing the toughest national schedule in program history. The Cardinal also captured the Mountain Pacific Lacrosse League championship,

the sixth consecutive season that they have won the conference title. To accentuate the Cardinal's rapid development, Stanford was also consistently ranked among the nation's elite and finished the season with a No. 14 national ranking by the Intercollegiate Women's Lacrosse Coaches Association.

"In a short amount of time, we have put the program on the map and engineered a push for one of the eight at-large spots in the NCAA tournament," said Uhlfelder. "We came up just shy last year, but this year will be no different in that our schedule will test us. We'll know who we are by the end of the season. We'll have many opportunities to prove ourselves among the nations top teams. As a result, we'll give the NCAA Lacrosse Tournament Committee many chances to evaluate us."

Stanford, who earned its first-ever preseason ranking in 2004 (No. 14 IWLC, No. 19 *Lacrosse Magazine*), looks to continue its steady rise on the collegiate women's lacrosse scene, as the Cardinal return 18 letterwinners, including its top five goal scorers from last season. Combined with another outstanding freshman class, the Cardinal boast an exciting combination of youth and veteran leadership that will once again have Stanford among the nation's best.

"This year's team combines experience and youth, but overall it is the most experienced team we've ever had," said Uhlfelder. "Many of these players have seen many minutes and experienced many first-hand lessons. I think they are anxious to get out there and compete. They have turned the volume up in practice...now they are ready to take on the talent on our schedule and be tested."

New Horizon

Through scheduling some of the toughest teams in the country and recruiting the best and the brightest student-athletes, Uhlfelder has accomplished something once thought of

as impossible at a school in the west. Though Uhlfelder has developed Stanford into one of the most promising programs in the country, the Baltimore, MD native knows that there is still much to accomplish.

In 2003, the Cardinal faced some of the best teams in the country, highlighted by wins over then-No. 11 Ohio State, No. 15 Notre Dame and No. 20 Northwestern. These impressive wins combined with holding its own versus then-No. 1 Loyola (MD) and then-No. 3 Duke, proved to the nation that the Stanford women's lacrosse program was one to watch.

"Some of our alums remember a very different time. We have players who have seen so much change. They have worked hard and chosen to believe. Last year we received weekly recognition by the IWLC in the national polls. As a result, the NCAA Championship Committee had to talk about us at NCAA tournament time. For the first time, they had to consider us. I hope we make it tough on them again this year," said Uhlfelder.

Returning Stars

The Cardinal return a wealth of talent from last season's 14-4 MPLL championship team. Of the 18 returning letterwinners, 10 players started 13 or more contests for the Cardinal. The 2004 Stanford squad is talented and deep, returning core players on defense, in the midfield and in attack.

Attack

Leading the attack for the Cardinal is 2003 Mountain Pacific Lacrosse League Rookie of the Year, Megan Burkner. As a freshman last season, Burkner started all 18 games and enjoyed one of the finest seasons in Stanford women's lacrosse history. The Baltimore, MD native ranked second on the team in goals (38), assists (17), and points (55) en route to being named to the 2003 MPLL All-Star team. Burkner is once again expected to be one of the team leaders in the Stanford attack.

The Cardinal attack is further bolstered by the return of senior Kim Cahill (15 goals, 11 assists), sophomore Sarah Bach (12 goals, 6 assists), junior Claire Calzonetti (16 goals, 7 assists).

Midfield

The Cardinal boast a deep, experienced nucleus at midfield, led by standout juniors Nina Pantano and Kelsey Twist. Twist, a Baltimore, MD native, turned in a dominant sophomore season, leading the Cardinal in six different categories, most notably goals (43), assists (28), and draw controls (46). Twist started all 18 games and was named to the Mountain Pacific Lacrosse League (MPLL) All-Star team. Pantano, a Wayne, PA native, was also a force for the Cardinal, scoring 31 goals and adding nine assists, while starting all 18 games.

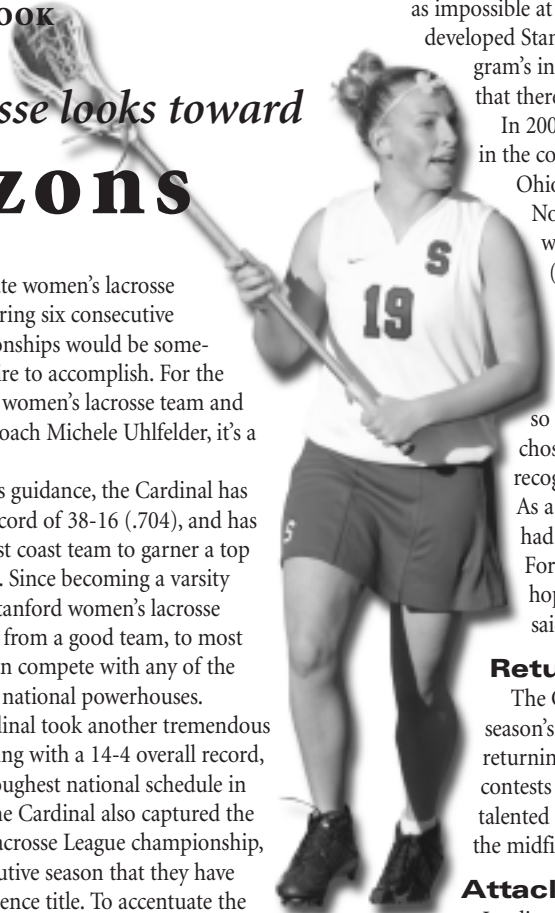
Joining Pantano and Twist in the midfield is senior Abbi Hills, junior Julia Calzonetti (twin sister of Claire Calzonetti), and sophomore Cassie Harvey. Hills started all 18 games last season, scoring 29 goals and adding 14 assists. Julia Calzonetti, who also appeared in all 18 games, registered 24 goals and seven assists, while Harvey, who saw action in all 18 games with eight starts, added eight goals.

Defense

The Cardinal defense should once again be solid with the return of the core defensive unit from 2003. Senior Katie



Katie Grube



Sarah Bach



Grube, along with classmate Tiffany Chao and junior Anthea Tjuanakis, started all 18 games and should once again anchor the Cardinal defense in 2004. Grube and Tjuanakis combined to cause 54 turnovers and recorded 78 groundballs. The return of senior Larissa Conte, along with sophomores Nyerr Parham, Kinsey Morrisson and Thea Lorentzen, provide the Cardinal with added depth and experience on the defensive end.

Stanford also returns senior goalkeeper Chrsitina Saikus, who started in 15 of the 17 games that she appeared in during the 2003 campaign. Last season, Saikus logged 893:46 minutes in goal and registered a team-high 147 saves, good for fifth most in a single season in program history. The Highland Heights, OH native, along with sophomore Kate Horowitz, a former high school All-American, give the Cardinal two talented goalkeepers with big game experience.

Newcomers

The Cardinal welcome five dynamic freshman to the program in 2004. Along with the five newcomers, Liz Kittleman returns to the Cardinal women's lacrosse program as a volunteer assistant coach.

Michelle DeChant joins the Cardinal after graduating from Annapolis Senior High School in Annapolis, MD. In her senior season in high school, DeChant scored 52 goals and added 24 assists. DeChant, who earned first team All-American honors while in high school, could see time at either midfield or attack.

Bryanne Gilkinson, a native of Mississauga, Canada, comes to The Farm after graduating from Cawthra Park Secondary School. Gilkinson brings international experience, having participated in the 2003 U-19 World Championships and helping Canada capture the bronze medal with a 16-10 win over England. Gilkinson should be an excellent addition to the already stout Stanford defense.

Elizabeth Piselli, a talented midfielder from Rockville Centre, NY native, earned All-American status while at South Side High School. Piselli, a member of the U-19 US National Team, enjoyed a stellar career at South Side, culminated by an amazing 76 goals and 32 assists in her senior season. Piselli, who brings excellent speed, is expected to step in and contribute to the Stanford midfield.

Carly Posner, a freshman goalkeeper from Owings Mills, MD, joins the Cardinal after graduating from The Park School. A four-year letterwinner in lacrosse, Posner, a two-time team captain, posted over a 60 percent save percentage in both her junior and senior seasons. Posner should battle for playing time with incumbent goalkeeper Saikus and sophomore Horowitz.

Rounding out the freshman class is Jessica Verrilli, a midfielder from Seattle Washington. Verrilli, a graduate of Seattle Preparatory School, was selected as an All-American in 2003 and earned all-state first team honors in 2002 and 2003. Verrilli, a two-time Academic All-American, will be an excellent addition to the Stanford midfield in 2004.

"The freshmen bring a lot to our program. It is a very bal-

anced class and we look for them to make an immediate impact," said Uhlfelder. "They can't be shy in bringing their experiences and skills to the team. Look for good things from them!"

Liz Kittleman returns to the Stanford women's lacrosse program as a volunteer assistant coach after taking a one-year hiatus. Kittleman served as an assistant coach under Head Coach Uhlfelder in 2001, and as the program's director of lacrosse operations in 2002. Kittleman was a four-year letterwinner (1994-98) in lacrosse at Union College in New York and graduated with a degree in Art History.

The Schedule

The Cardinal has once again assembled an extremely competitive schedule, facing seven teams that advanced to the NCAA Tournament. This season, the Cardinal will host perennial powerhouses in Loyola (MD), Georgetown, Norte Dame, Dartmouth, Vanderbilt and Ohio State and will play at Duke.

Stanford will join its four other former MPLL schools in the inaugural season as the newly adopted Mountain Pacific Sports Federation. Significant contribution of the league's 6th member will come in 2005 with the University of Oregon's first NCAA season. Also, with the elevation of UC Davis from Division II to Division I, the MPSF will have the six teams necessary for the NCAA to soon be looking west for its newest league, and automatic qualifier.

"We are a pure growth league.

Lacrosse is growing on this coast, and we are excited about the national impact that our conference can make in the next few years with an automatic bid. We'd like to represent this conference at the NCAA tournament for the first time. While we are ecstatic about the future, we have our minds rooted firmly in the present, as we aim for one of the coveted at-large spots as an independent. Our next recruiting class will have even greater opportunity as they will vie for an automatic bid. In the meantime, this team is focused getting there on our own."

While under Uhlfelder's guidance, Stanford University has been a tremendous ambassador for the sport of women's lacrosse. Besides hosting Vanderbilt university in the third annual East/West Challenge on March 7, 2004, Stanford will host the third annual Western States Tournament on April 3-4. The Western States Tournament gives fans an opportunity to watch upwards of 50 high school and collegiate club teams compete.

"Supporting the growth of lacrosse here is a fun thing for our players—it adds a lot of value to their lacrosse careers here. Our staff feels the same way, and this is why we host a number of lacrosse events here at Stanford."



Kim Cahill

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Cassie Harvey



Stanford's Coaching staff