

CU Dance Team: Dancing on the Court

By Jonna Stark

"Five and six and seven and eight!" Concordia University's Dance Team has gotten off to an amazing start this year. Since last year, Concordia's dance team has, just about, doubled in size—which is an amazing feat for coach Stefane Escay, who is leading the team for her first time. Escay is actually a student herself at Concordia, but she took on the challenge of coaching the dance team to fill a last minute vacancy. Escay rescued the program: the team is working hard and performing well.

How has Escay, a junior, managed to turn this team around and bring up the number of people involved, from just eight women last year to 15 women this year? Escay, who also plays on Concordia's women's soccer team and is the co-producer and co-host of Concordia's TV show detail, did not want to have tryouts for the team. Rather, she wanted people who were willing to learn how to dance and be dedicated to the team. Escay herself picked up soccer as an extra-curricular activity. Although she had never played before, she worked hard to learn the sport and is certainly a vital

asset to the soccer team.

Escay says, "I am a prime example of just picking up an extra-curricular activity. I wanted people to try out who wanted to have fun and be willing to work at it. I knew if we continued to just polish the routines, the dances would come together."

Athletic Director Dan O'Brien is pleased with the number of women involved in the Dance Team as an extra-curricular activity. He acknowledged, "The numbers are higher than I've ever seen them—that's encouraging." O'Brien also sees the Dance Team as a way for more people at Concordia to participate in some kind of activity on campus. O'Brien stated, "I think the dance team is yet another opportunity for people to compete and to be involved."

Already the team has performed a variety of routines for both football and basketball games.

These routines have included different styles of dance ranging from country to pop to hip-hop and funk. Although the talents of each person on the team vary, they all seem to want to help one another out, so that each person will be able to perform their best.

Some of the women, like Escay, have been dancing since they were young kids. "It is a passion of mine," Escay said. Many other dance team members, like senior Jessie Barnum, wanted "to try something new and fun." Plus, she adds, "I heard they had a good coach." Along with Escay, Shelly Johnson a sophomore, helps lead the team. Escay is the creative mastermind behind the choreography for the dances. Johnson then works out the formations so the team looks right for performance. Johnson also has amazing patience when working with the girls who need extra help to get the routines down.

Most women on the team would agree that the two are laid back in their coaching style but realize that Escay and Johnson are serious about what they do. This was obvious when the dedicated team got up at 5 a.m. for a week of practices to polish their routine before a big performance.

All the women on the team agree that Escay and Johnson work well together and have given this dance team solid leadership.

Under this leadership, the team had the opportunity to perform at the Metrodome.

On Friday November 9,



(above) Concordia's dance team proudly poses after their successful performance at the Metrodome
Photo Submitted by Concordia's Dance Team

Concordia's football team played their last game of the season at the Metrodome, and the dance team performed a new routine at half time. Freshman dance team member Ashley Nupdal said of the experience: "It was very exciting and special because it's not something that everyone has the opportunity to do." Dance Team's 15 dedicated women have shown what hard work and team unity can accomplish. Because they perform for both football and basketball games, the dance season is a lot longer than many other sports. They have received a lot of positive feedback from people at Concordia who have come to cheer their performances on at games. Freshman Ashley Hyatt

observed at one of their performances, "They did a very good job. They showed a lot of skill and seemed very organized."

Ultimately, the team just wants to dance. Jen Van Pelt, junior, said she is on the team simply because: "I like to perform and smile."

They all want to get out there and move around and express themselves with one of the oldest forms of art. They want to feel the music and dance.

JoElyn Otto, a junior, summed up what the serious yet laid back Concordia Dance Team is all about: "It's like someone famous once said: 'Combining girls, music, and spandex can never be a bad idea.'"

Men's Hoops Review: Improving Top Concern

By Casey Lux

The Men's Basketball Team hopes to improve from last year's 9-18 overall record (4-12 record in the NSIC Conference play) this season with a blend of veterans and rookies. With a roster filled with freshman and three transfers, the team will have to mold and

blend together as quickly as possible for more marks in the win column. Looking at the biggest improvement from last year's squad, Coach Jim Datka said, "Our talent level and depth is better than last year, from top to bottom we have better players and more of them."

With more depth and key returnees the expectations for this season are at a higher level. "I

want us to be more competitive, night in and night out, and I want to make sure that our new guys are running the system correctly," Datka confidently stated. The Golden Bears (who were ranked sixth in the preseason coaches poll), again face a challenging schedule with the likes of two Division I opponents, Chicago State and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, not forget-

ting the NSIC powerhouses. "The front-runners of the conference include Duluth, Southwest State, Winona State and Northern State, for the third year in a row," Datka said.

Some key players to watch in the Golden Bears 2001-2002 NSIC lineup include seniors Josh Delich, Enaut Aranbarri, and Matt Tuttle. "The seniors are our players to watch with Dan Torrez and Justin Vandenberg, two freshman that will be thrown into the mix, helping them out," said Datka. "Delich is one of the better players in the conference and is the third leading scorer of returnees in our league," commented Datka about his senior playmaker. "Aranbarri is very athletic and plays extremely hard for us and Tuttle is one of the purest three point shooters in our league," said Datka, who has coached Tuttle at St. Scholastica and CU.

The two freshmen Torrez and Vandenberg are topping of the starting lineup with the seniors. Coach Datka had this to say about two of his seven recruits, "They don't play like freshman, and they belong out on the court and play extremely poised. These two freshmen have done a nice job so far helping score points and controlling the glass on offense and defense."

The coaching staff has some new faces to it this year, along

with the young Golden Bears on the court. New coaches to "Datka's Disciples" include Jamison Rusthoven, Ryan Freeberg and Concordia's own Ben Kleoppel. Rusthoven is fresh off having turned around the Minneapolis Southwest program and now ready to Division II NSIC opponents. "With more bodies, we'll be able to get more done, and with more eyes at practice and games, as coaches, we can critique and make the team better. "Coach "Q" and coach Phillips will still make the majority of decisions that our assistant coaches instill," Datka commented on his mix of old and new coaching staff.

Currently, the Golden Bears are 2-2 with one of their losses coming to the hands of Division I Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the other to NSIC member Augustana. With a schedule filled with tough non-conference opponents, the Golden Bears hope to gain experience before the NSIC conference play starts. "We should be exciting to watch; we entertain two top 10 teams in South Dakota State on December 4 and Saint Cloud State on December 10, both games are at home," commented Datka.

With a mix of old and new, the Golden Bears hope to climb in the NSIC conference standing this year. To do this they will need fan support and crowd noise to give them a home court advantage.

Woman's Hoops Review

By Debbie Burke

The 2001/02 Women's Basketball season looks to be an exciting one. With six returnees and eight freshmen, this team is both bigger and better than last year. Head Coach Paul Fessler said, "It's nice to look at the bench and have someone to put in."

Although they may be young, as this year's team has no returning seniors, they reap experience and guidance from the team captains—sophomore Jessica Arbogast-Combs, junior Kristi Shaw and junior Lisa Harfield. Fessler looks to these girls mainly "to keep the freshman focused on basketball and books."

Kristi Shaw said that besides being a leader on the court, she tries to help out freshmen off the court with school issues and any

questions they need answered.

One of the biggest factors this year could be returnee and co-captain Lisa Harfield who last year earned the First Team Lutheran All American Award, making her the first sophomore ever to earn the prestigious award. Fessler said of Harfield, "She's a big asset to the team, and she still has one more year. She's outstanding."

On December 11, the Golden Bears' next home game, Harfield will be presented with her All American plaque at half time.

Another important game to attend will be on December 14, where the team will face the St. Cloud Huskies at home.

The team has been picked to finish fifth overall in the conference this year, but has the capability to go all the way. Knowing that his team is very young Fessler

said, "It will be a growing process."

He also feels that, "It is best if they don't get ahead of themselves."

Despite this humble statement, the team and coaching staff know that they are capable of accomplishing great things.

In fact, the team defeated one of their toughest opponent this year, South Dakota State. The CU women won 79-77, breaking a school record at the free throw line by hitting a whopping 37 out of 49 shots.

They are looking to finish in the top half of the conference this year and to advance to the playoffs next year when the team is eligible under NCAA rules.

Truly this team has a challenging season and a bright future ahead of them.