

Football signing continued...

Also on the offensive end, the Golden Bears will add three solid running backs to the squad next fall, one of which Mauer referenced as one of the best in Minnesota. Only one new face will be vying for the quarterback position next year since despite inexperience in the possible candidates for the job, there is already solid depth at the position.

In terms of defense, Mauer and his staff focused mainly on the linebacker position this off-season, adding seven players to the roster. Besides beefing up in the middle, they also signed some solid players at other positions, including a couple on the defensive line and one in the secondary. "We were very excited to sign an outstanding defensive back from Totino-Grace who will add important depth on defense," said Mauer.

Camp is sure to be competitive next fall as the talented incoming freshmen will fight for an opportunity to play right away. "Everyone including freshmen will get an opportunity to prove themselves at camp," said Mauer, "and based on performance, the best will play."

Things are likely a little calmer for Mauer and his staff this week now that signing day has passed, but recruiting isn't over. The coaching staff will continue to recruit well into the summer and try to fill all their needs before camp begins next fall. "After signing day, we always hope to pick up a couple more kids who will help us," said Mauer.

Mauer and his staff are optimistic about the future of Concordia football with this year's recruiting class. They may not make a huge impact right away next fall, but as mostly incoming freshmen, they are sure to leave their mark at Concordia before they're done. "We're building for the future," said Mauer, "and we like what we see!"

Spring Break: More Than Just Fun in the Sun

By Lance Meyer, sports editor

The Gangelhoff Center has been booked solid lately due to the changing of the seasons. Winter is slowly giving way to spring, and with that, Concordia's spring sports teams have begun regular work-outs in preparation for their coming seasons. While the weather is still frigid and miserable outside, Concordia's baseball, softball, and golf teams have been working hard indoors and are itching for competition to start.

There's no chance of that being anytime soon here in Minnesota, however, as temperatures continue to hover around zero and the snow doesn't appear to want to go anywhere. How can you compete with warmer-climate teams when you can't get outdoors even for practice until after the season is supposed to start? Over the past few years, spring break trips have become the only possible answer to this problem.

Next week all three of the spring sports teams, men and women, will head to Florida to practice and compete for a week in the warmer weather. "It gives our team the opportunity to get outside and play some games early in the season," said softball head coach Bob Bartel. "Practicing indoors for five weeks can become tiresome so it's a good break from being inside."

People often misconceive the trips to be cheap vacations when in reality they are an essential part to each team's success. "Having a spring trip is crucial to us," said head men's and women's golf coach Matt Higgins. "It's a great way to start a long sea-

son, and it really focuses and encourages us as we go into the spring."



Pitcher Aaron Pfalzgraff during a spring break baseball game in Fort Myers, FL in 2007. Photo courtesy Mike Carlson, Sports Information photographer, St. Leo University (www.carlsonphotos.com)



Golfer Danny Johnson swings the sticks during a spring break practice round in 2007. Photo courtesy of Lance Meyer.

The trips aren't cheap for the players either as they pay out of their own pockets between 350-450 dollars apiece. Then the rest of the money is fundraised by the players and coaches. "Since the fall of 1999, the baseball team has raised over \$360,000 to fund our trips and other expenses," said head baseball coach Mark McKenzie.

Even though all three sports are traveling to Florida this spring break, their schedules and plans all look a little different. The baseball team will play eight non-conference games in Florida which will count

towards their overall record, and again this year, a highlight of their trip will be playing an exhibition game against the Minnesota Twins. "Plenty of good seats still available," according to McKenzie.

The softball team will get ten games in this year while they're in Florida, and like the baseball team will have some fun as well. "After our games are over for the day, we will try to catch some of the baseball team's games, go to the beach, and spend some time at the Minnesota Twins spring training complex," said Bartel who sees the trip as a vital time for the team to bond and grow as a group.

While the baseball and softball teams spend their week in Fort Myers, the men's and women's golf teams will hit the links in the Orlando area. Their week will be filled with less competition and more practice, but they will benefit from the week in the sun all the same.

"We will hold our matches for our annual 'Ryder Cup' tournament against Upper Iowa University down at spring break this year," explained Higgins. While the competition will be structured a little differently than normal, it will still help the players keep their competitive edge and shake off the rust from the off-season.

Not only are their spring break trips vital for their success in the coming season, but going south for a week is also very helpful in recruiting. "Players look forward to going to warm weather destinations, and we promise them that opportunity every season throughout their career," said Bartel regarding recruiting. McKenzie also alluded to the importance of the spring trip saying, "As far as recruiting, we have to be on a semi-level playing field including where we travel."

The Gangelhoff might be a little empty next week, but it won't be because the athletic teams are taking time off. Instead they will be in Florida getting their seasons underway and working to improve before the start of conference play.

Upcoming Athletic Schedule

Feb. 22 Men's and Women's Basketball Home vs. Southwest Minnesota State

Feb. 22 Track & Field Men @ Snowshoe Open, U of M

Feb. 23 Track & Field Women @ Minnesota Open, U of M

Feb. 23 Men's and Women's Basketball Home vs. Wayne State 6:00

Feb. 22-27 Men's and Women's Golf in Orlando- Matches vs. Upper Iowa

Feb. 22-29 Baseball and Softball in Fort Myers

Feb. 29-March 1 Track & Field Men and Women @ NSIC Indoor Championship, Bemidji, MN

March 1, 7-8 Women's Basketball Home for NSIC Tournament

March 1, 7-8 Men's Basketball @ NSIC Tournament

