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Todd's notebook: Sasser Cup—Twice as Nice

June 01, 2009 | Todd Wetmore

Proving that last year's run of conference championships was more than a one-year surge, Liberty Athletics just recently polished off another Big South Sasser Cup championship season.

Thanks to a total-group effort, the Flames took home the league's top overall athletics honors, doing so for the seventh time in the last 12 athletics seasons. Liberty now stands just two Sasser Cup championships away from tying Coastal Carolina for the most decorated athletics department in Big South history.

Last go-around, Liberty took home the title in eight of 17 conference-eligible sports. In doing so, Liberty also claimed rights to the league's Men's All-Sport and Women's All-Sport trophies, becoming the second athletics department to sweep the league's "Triple Crown."

A strong showing by the Chanticleers on the female athletic field allowed Coastal Carolina to steal away this year's Women's All-Sport trophy. However, the Liberty men gave the Flames their second straight Men's All-Sport trophy and the fourth since the honor was established six years ago.

Coastal Carolina led the race for the Sasser Cup following the close of competition last fall. Liberty lingered in third place, despite the Flames taking home conference titles in football and volleyball for the second-straight time, while the men's cross country team raced to victory for the fourth-straight time to thrill hometown fans.

Liberty then looked to its stalwart winter programs to carry the banner during the frigid months. The women's basketball team won its 12th conference title in 13 seasons, while the men's indoor track program won its 12th-straight league title.

A runner-up finish by the women's track program and a third-place finish by the fourth-youngest men's basketball program in the country enabled Liberty to take over the Sasser Cup lead heading into the spring.

But the warm-weather days have usually favored the Chanticleers, as the Myrtle Beach-based athletics department traditionally thrives during the final three months of the athletic year, taking the Cup from Liberty four years in a row thanks to its strong spring sports programs.

Faced with the pressure to finish what 10 other athletics programs began the previous September, Liberty's spring programs put together one of their best collective shows in years.

The men's track program nearly doubled up the competition during the outdoor championships for its 14th title, while the women's squad raced to a second-place finish behind Coastal Carolina.

On the links, Liberty's golfers put together their best run on the course, finishing second to the Chanticleers, thanks in part to stellar play from Freshman of the Year Robert Karlsson, a nationally ranked golfer, who earned Liberty's first-ever individual at-large bid to the NCAA Regionals.

Liberty's men's and women's tennis programs seemingly fed off each other's successes, with both programs posting double-figure win totals. The women's team bettered last year's record-setting season by winning 15 matches, securing a regular season runner-up finish. Their male counterparts posted the second-best season in program history by capturing 13 wins.

On the softball diamond, one of the younger squads in program history used experience gained from a bruising early season schedule to finish third in the final standings. The team then upended the top two seeds in the Big South Championship, en route to its second-straight title game appearance and its fifth over the past 16 seasons, a mark that ranks third in league listings.

Over at Worthington Stadium, the baseball team posted its fifth-straight 30-win season and entered the Big South Championship as the No. 3 seed, thanks to its most league wins in program history. The success of the squad, which has made title game appearances the last three years, is bolstered by one of the hottest hitting teams in Liberty annals.

At year's end, all but three of the 17 Liberty athletics programs who compete in the Big South finished third or better in their respective standings. The feat left all that donned a Liberty uniform during the athletic season with the satisfaction of knowing they played a vital part in the total-team effort and making Liberty once again the one to beat on the field of competition.

Todd Wetmore is Liberty University's Assistant AD for Communications.

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