

“Inside the Circle”

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BISON FIELD HOCKEY PROGRAM

December, 2011



State of the Program Coach Jeremy Cook

What a crazy fall! Coming into this 2011 season, our goal was to continue work on raising the teams' overall competitive level in order to give ourselves the best chance at winning the Patriot League Championship. In many ways we were disappointed with our final outcome, losing to Lafayette in the championship game, but we have every reason to feel good and be proud of the journey we took to get to the final game and all of the things we accomplished along the way.

In our preseason newsletter, I nicknamed this season's schedule *The Challenge* and it certainly was! We finished with an 8-12 overall record and 3-2 pre-tournament in the Patriot League. Despite our 21 shots, 14 corners, and a stroke, we dropped a tough game to Lehigh. Fortunately, the team rallied the following weekend for a terrific Graham Field 3-1 win over American on Senior Day during Homecoming Weekend. With all the back and forth within the league, our shot at the Patriot League Tournament came down to our Halloween weekend game against Colgate. It was a cold, but thankfully un-snowy morning in Hamilton, New York and the Mighty Bison fought through for a 1-0 double overtime win, sneaking into the tournament as the fourth seed.

With all the final scores tallied and national champions crowned, we, the Bucknell Bison, ended up playing the toughest schedule of anyone in the Patriot League! Our schedule included four conference champions (not counting Lafayette), three top-ten teams, an additional two teams in the top 20, and four NCAA Tournament teams. What's more, we competed closely with them! It sounds a little counterintuitive, but the post-game feeling after some of these losses ranked up there with our wins. From a competitive standpoint, these tough games helped the team gain a real understanding of just how valuable it is to be pushed to the limit. I think the difficulties we faced in these games were absolutely the reason for our success in others. The confidence we felt going into the Patriot League tournament was built upon a realistic perspective of who we were as competitors and exactly what we were capable of when we worked together. I truly feel that, while it comes with some struggle, this kind of a schedule



The semi-final scoreboard, lit up after Tayler's game winning goal

is a recipe for success and that Bucknell continues to be an environment where the students both seek and thrive off of challenges. If you want to be the best, you have to play the best.

This was also a year of benchmark wins! As we climbed closer to the top 20 teams, we had very meaningful wins against both Lock Haven and Villanova, two teams that we had not yet beaten during my time here. Both teams are strong in their respective conferences and have traditionally been in the 20-35 RPI range. But as we look back on the season as a whole, these two wins are just icing on the cake of our most major accomplishment: two wins over American



Looking focused on a corner

University. The first, an unbelievably meaningful home game that included three phenomenal goals. The second, a David versus Goliath match-up between the number one and number four seed in the Patriot League Tournament. Leigh Hillman scored her first career goal to get things started and even though the Eagles fought back to tie 2-2, Tayler Siegrist's corner flick in the last 5 minutes, put the game away! Not only was it a monumental win for our team, but also for the league, knocking American out of the Championship for the first time since 2003. After such an emotional semi-final game, it was tough to get rid of all that excitement before the next day's challenge. For the majority of the team, it was their first time in the finals. In the end, Lafayette proved the stronger team in a relatively chaotic game.

After reflecting on *The Challenge*, I feel our future looks strong. As crazy as it might sound to some of our recent alumnae, we have a freshmen class who are now 2-0 against American! We lose four true Bucknellians (more about their upcoming adventures in the next newsletter) whose effort and leadership this year were vital in keeping the team together and on track, but we retain a squad of players who, having made it through the tough times, see what kind of success can be gained from pushing yourself to the test. We've been there, now it's getting there and grabbing that championship trophy!!

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Substitution Execution

Increasingly popular at the Olympic level, the pre-planned sub rotation is slowly making its way into the college game as well. This season we as a coaching staff decided to change our philosophy toward game-time substitutions and experimented with the new model, planning timed substitutions for certain positions and posting them on the sideline for the student-athletes to execute. The diagram below shows the players along the left organized by position and the minutes of a single half across the top.

There are many rationales for this approach to substitutions and chief among these is that the game of hockey has dramatically increased in speed every year: no off-sides, rolling subs, synthetic sticks, faster playing surfaces, higher level of basic skill, and now the self-start! As a result, team's trying to play a high tempo game, are forced to rotate their strikers and midfielders, as it would be difficult for a player at any level to physically sustain that fast of a pace for 35 minutes. The challenge becomes organizing 15 to 20 substitutions per half while also trying to coach players on the field and on the sidelines. In our team's model, we decided not to rotate the back three, in order to create continuity and keep the communication moving forward through the lines. Our midfielders and strikers each had their own type of interchange that changed slightly from game to game. In this way, with the pre-planned rotation in the hands of the players, the coaches had more time to communicate and interact with players during the game. In an ideal world, the rotation would be able to flow without a hitch, but this is sport and what makes sport exciting is that you never know what could happen! To counteract that unpredictability, we also

The substitution card for one of our games later in the year. At one glance you can use the minutes along the top to see who is on the field and if they are coming off soon.

created contingency plans for situations at the end of the game that inevitably require flexibility.

Although it took some getting used to, we were proud of how the group took on this new substitution philosophy. Though it seems like a more rigid system, the rotation made it possible to get more than three-quarters of our team on the field during games. In a really cool way, our new substitution model highlighted the team's various strengths, with different groupings of players together at any given time. The feedback was pretty great, ranging from our ability to go through the season relatively injury free, to our sustainable speedy tempo, to the predictability of players being able to burn themselves out over a shorter shift while knowing that they would get a rest. I look forward to seeing what this spring holds and seeing how we can further our experiment!

Calendar of Awesome Awards

- September 13th
 - o **Amie Pritchard**, Patriot League and ECAC Defensive Player of the week for defensive save against Central Michigan
 - o **Rachel Misko**, Patriot League Honorable Mention for game winning goal against Central Michigan
- September 20th
 - o **Ellie Riegel**, Patriot League Rookie of the Week for OT goal against Lock Haven
 - o **Vickie Resh**, Susquehanna Valley Limousine Athlete of the week and Patriot League Honorable Mention for quality defensive play against Lock Haven
- October 1st
 - o **Marci Richard**, September Field Hockey Student Athlete of the Month
- October 4th
 - o **Rachel Misko**, Patriot League and ECAC Offensive Player of the Week for one goal and two assists against Holy Cross
 - o **Taylor Siegrist**, Honorable Mention for one goal, one assist against Holy Cross
- October 11th
 - o **Mallory Smith**, Honorable Mention for one goal, one assist against Lafayette
- October 18th
 - o **Mallory Smith**, Honorable Mention for two goals in an over time win against Towson
- October 22nd
 - o **Win over American University is the 300th program victory.**
- October 24th
 - o **Katie Durkin**, Susquehanna Valley Limousine Bison Athlete of the Week and Patriot League Offensive Player of the Week for two goals in win over American
 - o **Erica Perrine**, ECAC Defensive Player of the Week and Patriot League Goalkeeper of the Week for 11 saves against American
 - o **Vickie Resh**, Honorable Mention for quality defensive play against American
- October 31st
 - o **Mallory Smith**, Offensive Player of the Week for OT goal against Colgate
 - o **Erica Perrine**, Goalkeeper of the Week for 16 saves against Syracuse
- November 1st
 - o **Erica Perrine**, October Field Hockey Student Athlete of the Month



The 2011 Bucknell Field Hockey Team

2011 Patriot League Awards

Academic All-Patriot League

- Marci Richard
- Taylor Siegrist
- Mallory Smith

1st Team All-Patriot League

- Marci Richard
- Rachel Misko
- Mallory Smith

2nd Team All-Patriot League

- Erica Perrine
- Vickie Resh

All-Tournament Team

- Erica Perrine
- Vickie Resh
- Rachel Misko

Senior Perspective

by Kate Bowen

The class of 2012 has appeared in the Patriot League Tournament four years in a row; the first class in Bucknell field hockey history with such an accomplishment. Entering the team as a freshman, I did not realize what an honor it is to qualify for the tournament. My previous knowledge of team history and tournament appearances was limited. As a freshman I just assumed this is what Bucknell field hockey does; the team goes to the tournament. Once we were eligible during my sophomore and junior years, the same idea applied and reinforced my notion of the role of Bucknell in the Patriot League. During this past season, my senior year, I expected the pattern to repeat and to enter the tournament once again. Playing the qualifying game against Colgate I realized that we as a team don't just automatically make it into the tournament, sometimes it takes a double overtime win in cold New York weather to get there. This hard fought game showed me just how special it is to make the tournament. Reputation, team history, and talk do not result in being given a spot. Hard work, effort, persistence, and teamwork earn one of the four coveted positions.

Traveling to the tournament the past four seasons brought a different experience each time. Our initial rankings varied over the years, spanning second, third, and fourth, as well as our opponents in the first and final games. We were able to win the first round and make it to the final tournament game in both my freshman and senior years. Looking back, it is amazing how personal attitudes and reactions of the final game change. As a freshman, I did not play during the tournament, but even though I was not out on the field, I was excited and even a little nervous, cheering for my teammates on the sidelines. When we lost I was disappointed and sad, but I

knew there was always next year to try for the win again. The final game my senior year was completely different. My pregame feelings were a type of nervous I have never felt, barely able to sleep the night before and shaking while tying my turf shoelaces, yet at the same time feeling proud, full of excitement and joy. At the end of the game, with a loss on our side, I was not

disappointed or sad in the same way I felt three years ago; I was devastated with tears pouring down my cheeks as I hugged my teammates.

I never consciously thought of how much of myself I invested into this program. That final game made me realize that there wasn't a next year, there will not be a second shot. I was not hysterically crying because I wished I could have done more to win the game, I was crying because I would no longer be

part of a team, I would no longer put on a Bucknell field hockey uniform, I would no longer be able to have that feeling of mastering a skill or running a time goal, I would no longer talk, complain, cry, laugh, and sing in the locker room during preseason. I am proud that those final game tears were not because of lack of personal effort. I was able to walk off the field knowing that I gave everything I had over the course of four years and in that final game. I know the other seniors can say the same. Even though it is over for me, I hope the girls on the team can look at each season and tournament game and see an effort and investment level that will leave them feeling proud when that final game is upon them. Hopefully, my class will be joined by a number of other classes in that feeling of accomplishment after four years of tournament play.



Kate, on the far right, still digesting the semi-final win.

What a Weekend!

Amidst the chaos of the semester's opening weeks; mini-earthquake, days of rain, massive flooding, highway shutdowns, and student evacuations, the Bison Field Hockey team managed to pack up and head to the Wal-Mart parking lot to meet the bus for our eight hour adventure to Ann Arbor, Michigan. Like most bus trips the girls occupied their time with homework, Disney movies, and the newly created Name That Song game. Fortunately, we were able to break up our long journey with a warm, welcoming visit to the Obernesser's. While we all munched on the delicious eats grilled up by Mr. Obernesser, those of us in the backyard entertained



At the Obernessers

Lilly the dog and the folks inside made sure that Skittles and Twix, two hefty and loving cats, got some good petting. It was tough to leave, but we managed to get back on the road with our goodie bags in hand, arriving at the University of Michigan that afternoon for a quick practice and a good opportunity to shake out our legs.

It was up and at 'em early the next day for a game against Central

Michigan. After a rocky start, the team grabbed the moment in the second half and put it away only minutes into overtime for the 2-1 win. It was a relaxed afternoon with a lobby tailgate back at the hotel and a little bit of

time for homework before getting dolled up in our best Bison t-shirts and jeans for dinner and the Michigan versus Notre Dame Football game, the first nighttime home football game in Michigan's school history. Little did we realize what a game it would be! Arriving an hour before kickoff, we got a chance to see both teams go through warm-up, throw back a couple of practice field goals, witness the battle of the bands, some cheerleading success and a few baton throwing mishaps, the student section across the stadium getting wild, take tons of pictures, and make a few new Bison fans of the people sitting next to us! And of course, there was the game itself! Unfortunately we had to dip out before the third quarter, but who knew what an exciting finale it would be? That awesome ending made for excellent breakfast conversation the next day.



Bison Horns at the Big House

It was a tough game against the Wolverines on the field hockey field that Sunday, but despite the score, the Bison played some mighty defense and had a few flashes of offensive prowess. The tired crew with bellies full of Jimmy John's sandwiches, took most of the trip back to sleep, do homework, and squeeze in a few more movies. Arriving back in Lewisburg in what seemed to be another Central Pennsylvania monsoon seemed only fit as the team hurried back to campus, trying their best to stay dry. It was an action packed weekend; one we can look back on knowing that we were able to be a part of history!



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What we need is more cowbell

Evan Smith, Stephen Levine, Jeff Mindock: the famous, always enthusiastic, often loud, sometimes infamous (depending on the ref), forever spirited Bison Bunch. With their fearless orange-haired flag toting leader the Bunch have tirelessly supported the Bison field hockey team for four years and what a ride it has been. During the past four seasons, no team has a fan base that compares! We know that you will pass on your torch to other team siblings (Ben, this means you,) but will always remember the spark you brought to every event, home or away. Thank you, thank you, thank you for your endless passion for Bison Field Hockey, we will dearly miss you all... and the cowbell.



Evan and Jeff containing their excitement

Thank you!

We would like to extend our gratitude and give a huge thank you to those that donated to the program this past year. As most of you know, we need to fundraise for about 30% of what it takes to keep the program running from year to year. In order to maintain the experience that the program provides our student-athletes, we are reliant on your donations. So thank you!

If you have not yet had a chance to give back this year, simply log in to www.bucknellbison.com and click on the Bison Club tab, then on Make a Gift. When you choose Field Hockey as your designation, that money goes directly into our budget and is used for everything from team travel to sticks.

Keep in Touch

We would love to hear from you! Zap us an email, or drop us a line, we are always interested in connecting with alumni, friends, and family. Let us know when you played, and what you are up to now! Also, if you are not getting periodical emails with specific game recaps, please email us at jac059@bucknell.edu so that we can add you to the list!