

Grizzly Bites - Issue No. 13 - March 29, 2011

TO: Fans, Friends, Alumni, and supporters of Oakland University Athletics

It has been an extended period of time since we last touched base with an edition of Grizzly Bites. I apologize for the delay as we have much to report. Despite the current economic challenges, and what has seemed to be the longest winter in quite awhile, Oakland Athletics continues to excel! The continued emphasis, and success, of our student-athletes, coaches and staff in academic achievement, athletic performance and service activities is as strong as ever. I did not know if we could follow up the great fall season with an equally successful winter season, but we have done just that. Hopefully you have read that we continue to lead the Commissioner's Cup standings and hold leads in the All Sports Award standings for both men and women. Congratulations to men's basketball, men's swimming and diving and women's swimming and diving teams for capturing Summit League championships this winter season.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Back in the fall, our student-athletes continued their excellence in the classroom, earning a league-high 63 Academic All-Summit League selections. Student-Athletes must have at least a 3.0 grade point average during their season of competition and have used a semester of eligibility to earn a place on their sports' All-Academic team. It is the third consecutive term that we have led the way for The Summit League.

Congratulations to senior volleyball player Brittany Dunn for boasting a perfect 4.0 GPA during the fall semester. We also had 25 distinguished scholars for the fall, which are student-athletes that earned a 3.6 or higher GPA.

ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE

March continues to be an exciting month at Oakland University. The men's basketball team made another impressive run through The Summit League finishing at 17-1 and went on to win their second consecutive regular season and tournament titles this year. As you all hopefully witnessed in person, Oakland gave No. 8 Texas all they could handle in a tough 85-81 defeat in the NCAA second round in Tulsa, Okla. Coach Greg Kampe is a finalist for National Coach of the Year and Mid-Major Coach of the Year, while Keith Benson repeated as Summit League Player of the Year. It was once again a special time on campus and the athletic department is very proud of the team and all of its accomplishments, including a nation's best 34-2 in league play over the last two years.

The men's and women's swimming and diving teams continued to impress at The Summit League Championships. The women's team scored over 1,000 points again, while the men finished with 999 points, both claiming their 12th consecutive league titles. We won 36 of the 40 events, sweeping the championship awards; Marcin Unold (Men's Swimmer of the Championship), Sandra Czerska (Women's Swimmer of the Championship), Jordan Zendejas (Men's Diver of the Championship), Chelsea Oates (Women's Diver of the Championship), Nick Evans (Men's Newcomer of the Championship), Vanessza Balogh (Women's Newcomer of the Championship). Coach Pete Hovland was also named Men's Swimming and Diving Coach of the Year.

The women's basketball team made a nice run at the conference tournament, knocking off regular-season champion Oral Roberts, 96-62, before falling in the championship game to South Dakota State, 61-54. Winning 20 games on the season is always a big accomplishment and we enjoyed their run to The Summit League Championship game.

COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

The athletic department and student-athletes know how important it is to help out the surrounding community and we had several events over the last few months. I cannot think of many relationships that are more important than we have with our local communities. Our student-athletes are making a positive impact and we can all feel a sense of pride in their commitment.

We had several events that were dedicated to the Light House Mission, swimming and diving mitten toss where they ask our fans to throw mittens on the O'rena floor during halftime of a men's basketball game. We also donated most of the proceeds from The Summit League Food Fight to the Light House Mission.

We hosted our annual Pink Zone game at the O'rena to help raise awareness for Breast Cancer, along with the Coaches vs. Cancer event at the Mongolian Barbeque. Thanks to Greg Kampe, Beckie Francis and the rest of the basketball coaching staffs for dedicating their time to be grillers to help raise money for the American Cancer Society.

Oakland University Athletics and the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee partnered with University Hills Elementary School on March 23 to enhance and encourage reading to local community youth. This special partnership allowed for OU student-athletes to assist with University Hills' efforts for March is Reading Month, a national campaign to promote reading. This was an opportunity for our student-athletes to read and serve as mentors and examples to the youth of the community.

LIGHTS! GRIZZLIES! ACTION!

In recent years, we have been fortunate to have completed several small projects to enhance the experience of our student-athletes and fans. Now, it's time to get serious! Our most recent capital project involves the completion of Phase I of the Soccer Stadium Project. Lights! Grizzlies! Action! is a campaign primary to placing lights on the OU Soccer Field. The goal is to have this and other minor facility enhancements completed by August 2011. This necessitates a financial commitment of \$450,000. Through the generosity of community members, alumni, current student-athletes, coaches, staff and various OU teams, we have raised half of the needed funding. We are appreciative to all of you that have made a commitment to this project that will enhance the OU experience for the entire community. Please continue to check the website as we develop a Lighting Project page and will list all those that make

a contribution, along with providing information on the project and a contribution form. Do not hesitate to contact us to discuss Lights! Grizzlies! Action!

VARSITY O

The Varsity O Association continues to grow and has become an integral opportunity for engagement with Student-Athlete Alumni. We ask for all of our alumni to check out the all-time letter winner page to make sure they are recognized. The main reason for developing this page was to invite former alums to get involved with the University and help build the future of Oakland Athletics. We are very fortunate to have many successful stories here at OU and look forward to what is to come. Get connected and sign up today!

The Varsity O page can be found here.

PRESIDENT'S INVITATIONAL

One of our biggest summer events is the President's Invitational Golf Event that will take place on Friday, June 10 at the R&S Sharf golf course on campus. This is a great way to kick off the golf season while supporting OU athletics and academic programs across campus. We'd like to thank Pepsi and Callaway Golf for their generous title sponsorships. For more information on this prestigious golf tournament, including participation or sponsorship opportunities, please contact Chad Thompson, Coordinator of Annual Giving, at 248-370-4034 or thomps5@oakland.edu.

GRADUATES AND CHAMPIONS

We will host our Graduates and Champions banquet on April 15 inside the O'rena. This is an annual event where we recognize all of our student-athletes and their significant accomplishments this year. We also acknowledge all the graduating seniors and thank them for all of their contributions to Oakland University.

THE SUMMIT LEAGUE FOOD FIGHT

The athletic department, along with the 18 intercollegiate sports, raised over \$4,000 dollars in cash and 460 pounds of canned food in just two weeks as part of the 2011 Summit League Food Fight competition. Congratulations to the men's basketball team for winning the competition between the sports by raising just over \$21 per student-athlete, edging the men's swimming and diving team. A special thanks to the Oakland University Residence Life Halls, Detroit Pistons/PS&E and Genisys Credit Union. All three made significant contributions to this great cause. The league wide results will be announced next month.

LIKE SKILLS EVENTS

Over the course of the last few months, our student-athletes have had many opportunities to sit in on workshops and life skills events. There was one on Eating to Win by Leslie Bonci, The Female Triad by Dr. Betty Chu, Etiquette Dinner in career services and local businesses, along with academic skills workshops in Textbook Reading Strategies, How to Ace a Test and Learning Styles.

3rd ANNUAL HOMECOMING

What another successful homecoming weekend at Oakland University. We launched the Varsity O program this year and had 350 alumni student-athletes join us before the men's basketball game on Jan. 29th versus Centenary. It was a tremendous turn out and we hope to continue to grow this great tradition here at Oakland. Thanks to all of those alums that came out and were recognized at halftime of the men's game. We look forward to seeing more and more of you in the future as this event grows.

THE CLIMATE

As I mentioned earlier, economic challenges have touched all of us. For higher education, budget cuts continue to be the number one agenda item. Our concern is the quality of education and experience provided for our Student-Athletes. As we prepare for a substantial reduction in our upcoming budget, I assure you that our coaches and staff are committed to the well being and experience of our Golden Grizzlies. Those of you that have graciously supported our mission in dedicating "our energy and resources to the betterment of our Student-Athletes" can be assured that your contributions to Oakland Athletics directly and positively impact the Student-Athletes. We have been fortunate to engage with alumni, friends and fans that have dedicated time, talent and financial resources to Oakland Athletics. We hope that you and others realize the value that intercollegiate athletics brings to this outstanding institution. We hope that you and others understand the pride we share in producing "Graduates and Champions." We appreciate all the Golden Grizzly fans and alums that have made contributions this year and hope you continue to get the word out about all of our successes. Realize that YOU are the reason we lead the Summit League in academic achievement, athletic performance and service commitment this year! Your support is valued, and needed, now more than ever.

To become a contributing member to Oakland Athletics, please contact Chad Thompson at 248-370-4034, thomps5@oakland.edu or go to OUgrizzlies.com under Support Athletics.

Please continue to send me your feedback whenever possible. While I cannot guarantee a personal response to every e-mail that we receive, please know that they will all be read, so I do encourage your participation in this process. Some of your questions/comments could become subjects for future issues of Grizzly Bites.

I also encourage you to share this letter with any OU fan or alumnus that may not have access to the internet. Our goal is to inform and engage as many Golden Grizzlies supporters as we possibly can.

I appreciate your support in our mission to "guide, encourage and support our Student-Athletes." Thank you for being an integral part in the success of Oakland Athletics.