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Jill Pudenz and Brad Schmit were named the Mustangs' basketball Most Valuable Players.

WHAT A BASKETBALL SEASON

Morningside basketball fans were treated to one of the most exciting basketball seasons in the college's history this past winter. How good was it? The Mustang women, who won NAIA Division II National Championships in 2004 and 2005, continued to rank among the nation's elite and made their fourth consecutive appearance in the national tournament. And this year, after near misses the previous two seasons, the Morningside men made it to the NAIA Division II National Tournament as well. The Mustang men did themselves proud at the national tournament by advancing all the way to the Elite Eight for their best post-season showing since a similar Elite Eight finish in 1994-95.

With a combined record of 56-14 between the two teams, it was perhaps the most successful overall basketball season in Morningside history in terms of won-lost records and post-season success.

Many thought the Mustangs' women's program might slip after the graduation losses of the 2004 and 2005 NAIA Division II National Players of the Year in **Brittany Carper 2005** and **Megan Cloud 2005**. But the Mustangs showed they have staying power to remain among the nation's elite by posting a 28-7 record and finishing the season ranked fifth in the nation. And they could continue to stay there as two of their leading scorers this year were freshmen **Dani Gass** and **Autumn Bartel**.

Morningside finished 16-2 in the Great Plains Athletic Conference (GPAC) to share the regular season title with eventual national champion Hastings College and won the GPAC's post-season tournament championship with an 81-65 rout of No. 6 Northwestern College in the title game. Although the Mustangs' unprecedented quest for a third consecutive NAIA Division II national title ended with an 80-60 upset loss against Cardinal Stritch University in the second round of the national tourney, this year's team accomplished something no other team in the history of the GPAC had ever done; namely win both the league's regular season and post-season tournament championships in the same year.

After playing in the shadows of Carper

MUSTANG MINUTES

By David Rebstock



and Cloud earlier in her career, senior guard **Jill Pudenz** elevated her game to a higher level this year to take her place among the nation's best. Pudenz earned second-team All-America honors and became Morningside's all-time leader with 366 career steals to break the former record of 359 by Carper. Pudenz was joined on the All-GPAC first-team by Gass, who was also named the GPAC's Freshman of the Year. Bartel and senior **Jennifer Francescon** were each named to the All-GPAC second-team, while senior **Kayla Wibben** made the All-GPAC honorable mention list.

The Morningside men also finished with a 28-7 record to set a school record for victories in a season. The Mustangs were GPAC post-season tournament champions, finished second in the GPAC during the regular season, and handed regular season champion University of Sioux Falls two of its three league defeats.

The Mustangs developed a reputation as the "Comeback Kids" the way they repeatedly came from behind to win close games. Their most improbable comeback probably came in the semifinals of the GPAC's post-season tournament when they rallied from nine points down with 1:53 left in regulation time en route to a 99-97 overtime win against Northwestern College. They came storming back again in the GPAC title game when they rallied from a 13-point halftime deficit to topple Dordt College 71-62 to punch their ticket to the national tournament at Point Lookout, Mo.

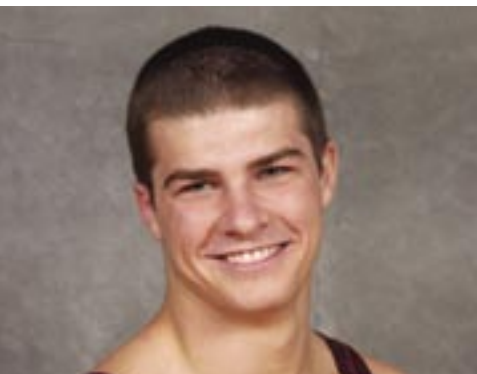
This was an experienced team, which no doubt played a major role in their ability to repeatedly come from behind. They started five seniors in **Brad Schmit**, **Tom Regan**, **Trevor Lally**, **Tim Johnson**, and **Paul Larsen**, and

one of the first players off the bench was senior **Paul McGill**.

Schmit wound up becoming Morningside's all-time scoring leader with 1,987 career points to break the former record of 1,950 points by **Chris Kuhlmann 1991**. Regan and McGill also went over the 1,000-career point mark during the season as well. Schmit earned NAIA Division II honorable mention All-America honors and was named to the first-team of the All-GPAC team for the third time. Mustang sophomore **Jack Rother** was named to the All-GPAC second-team, while Regan and Larsen each made the honorable mention list.

WRESTLING TEAM GOES 9-4

Morningside's athletic success wasn't just limited to the basketball court this winter. The Mustang wrestlers, in only their second season since the program's revival, posted a 9-4 record and qualified the maximum number of 12 wrestlers for the NAIA National Tournament, up from their six qualifiers of the previous season.



Jake Stevenson had the Mustangs' best record with a 45-8 mark and earned NAIA All-America honors for the second year in a row with a fourth

place finish in the 174 lb. division at the NAIA National Tournament. Stevenson raised his career victory total to 78 to break the former Morningside record of 68 wins by **Rick Nuss 1973**.

SOFTBALL TEAM TIES RECORD FOR WINS

The Mustangs' most successful team in the spring was a softball team that had a 42-15 record to tie a school record for wins in a season previously set in 1994. The Mustangs were the runner-up at the GPAC's post-season tournament and finished third at the NAIA Region III Championships. The leaders were sophomore **Whitney McElrath**, who was named the GPAC Pitcher of the Year and the NAIA Region III Pitcher of the Year, and junior second baseman **Jenna Jurrens**, who led the team with 12 home runs and a .418 batting average.

WARZECHA IS AN ALL-AMERICAN IN TRACK AND FIELD

Freshman **Vanessa Warzecha** set a school record in the women's javelin throw with a distance of 139-9 during the outdoor track & field season. She was the GPAC women's javelin champion and placed fifth in the event at the NAIA Outdoor Nationals to earn NAIA All-America honors.

Freshman **Anne Torkelson** finished third in the high jump at the GPAC Indoor Championships with a school-record height of 5-5 to qualify for the NAIA Indoor Nationals.