The opening kickoff of the year is still months away, but the anticipation of the 2009 Nevada Wolf Pack football season just keeps growing.

The Wolf Pack is certainly not an overnight sensation. Four bowl game appearances over the past four years have built the program, and its following, considerably. But the potential of this season’s schedule coupled with the potential of the Wolf Pack are certainly unmatched by anything in recent memory.

Head coach Chris Ault believes in potential but doesn’t live by it. A favorite saying of the longtime face of the program is, “There is a difference between perception and reality and we’re not about perception. We are all about reality.”

If you ask Ault about the 2009 season and what might be possible, the coach sets his jaw and stares back with a gleam in his steel blue eyes.

“Hang on,” he says with a hint of a smile. “Hang on.”

The numbers say that Nevada returns 15 starters this season but the numbers belie the importance of who is back in the Silver and Blue this year.

Offensively, Ault’s Pistol offense is not lacking for firepower. Starting with junior quarterback Colin Kaepernick, continuing with running backs Vai Taua and Luke Lippincott, Nevada has three players on its roster who have rushed for at least 1,000 yards in a season. And three starters from one of the best offensive lines in the conference return to pave the way.

Defensively, Nevada took a few lumps last season, but all of those young players are now one year older and one year wiser this season. Junior defensive ends Kevin Basped and Dontay Moch were among the nation’s leaders last season in tackles for loss and they will spearhead an attacking defense.

Nevada has had talented teams before. It’s had tough schedules before, too—but this time around is different. This talented squad is facing a schedule that poses some intriguing matchups and creates a multitude of reasons for optimism and excitement.

It starts with the season opener at, of all places, Notre Dame. Nevada will travel, with numerous fans in tow, to perhaps the most hallowed ground in all of college football. The Notre Dame campus is close to South Bend, Ind. and the College Football Hall of Fame, where Ault himself is enshrined.

After a bye week and then a road trip to Colorado State, the Wolf Pack begins its defense of Mackay Stadium when Big 12 powerhouse Missouri comes to Reno—the second straight season that a Big 12 school comes to Mackay.

The annual Battle for the Fremont Cannon follows as the Wolf Pack does battle with in-state rival to the south, UNLV, Oct. 3.
Nevada has won four straight meetings in the series.

From there, conference play begins as Nevada will host the likes of Fresno State, Louisiana Tech and Hawaii. The season culminates at WAC-rival Boise State on the Friday after Thanksgiving.

The schedule comes loaded with numerous television appearances, including five on national television. The opener at Notre Dame will be on NBC while ESPN will broadcast Nevada’s games against Missouri, Louisiana Tech and San Jose State. The Wolf Pack’s showdown at Boise State will be on ESPN2.

Season tickets for the 2009 Wolf Pack football season are on sale now by visiting or calling the Link Piazza Ticket Office at Legacy Hall at (775) 348-PACK (7225).

—Chad Hartley ’03, assistant director of Media Services
Matt Bowman and Dellena Criner have been named the 2008-09 Doc Martie & Ruth I. Russell Award winners as the University of Nevada, Reno’s top male and female student-athletes.

“Matt and Dellena have had outstanding collegiate careers and are very deserving of our athletics department’s most prestigious awards,” said athletics director Cary Groth. “Both Matt and Dellena are outstanding examples of everything that a student-athlete should be. They have played key roles in the success of their teams and have excelled in competition, the classroom and the community throughout their careers.”

The awards were named for J.E. “Doc” Martie, a former Nevada men’s basketball coach and administrator, and Ruth I. Russell, a former director of women’s athletics. Student-athletes are nominated by their head coaches and must be in their final year of eligibility and in good academic standing. The award winners are chosen in a vote by the athletics department staff.

A senior outfielder and infielder from Dayton, Nev., Bowman was a four-year starter and four-time Academic All-WAC honoree. He hit his 63rd career double in May to move past former Wolf Pack player and current Toronto Blue Jay Lyle Overbay (1996-99) to become Nevada’s career record holder in the category. A second-team All-WAC honoree as an outfielder in 2008, Bowman also ended his time at Nevada ranked in the Wolf Pack top five for career at bats, runs scored, hits, stolen bases and games played. In his senior year, he led the team in doubles and home runs, had the team’s third-best batting average and graduated in May with his degree in accounting.

“Matt Bowman has been the model for what you would want a student-athlete to be,” Wolf Pack baseball coach Gary Powers said. “He has been outstanding on the field as a player, teammate and leader by example giving 100 percent of himself to his team every day he has been here. He has been consistently solid in the classroom and an outstanding citizen and tremendous representative of our institution both on and off the field of play. He has been one of the most enjoyable people I have had the pleasure to coach and be associated with in my 27 years of service at Nevada. This is a well deserved honor, and we will surely miss him.”

A senior guard from Oakland, Calif., Criner was named the WAC Defensive Player of the Year in each of her last two seasons at Nevada. She also earned first-team All-WAC and WAC All-Academic honors three times during her career. A regional finalist for the 2009 Women’s Basketball Coaches Association All-America team and one of 30 finalists for the Lowe’s Senior CLASS Award, Criner became the first player in school history to record at least 1,500 career points, 350 career assists and 250 career steals. She ended her career as Nevada’s leader in all-time steals and games played, ranked second in career free throws made, third in assists (375) and fourth in scoring (1,629). Criner led the team in scoring in each of her last three seasons at Nevada and graduated in May with a degree in accounting.

“Dellena is an exceptional student-athlete who is very deserving of this prestigious award,” Nevada women’s basketball coach Jane Albright said. “She is a true difference maker, and her influence has been great in all aspects of our program. Dellena blessed us all with her leadership, dedication, personality, talent and character, and we will miss her greatly.”

—Rhonda Lundin, assistant athletics director for Media Services
Carter takes over the helm of Wolf Pack basketball

Wolf Pack Director of Athletics Cary Groth didn’t have far to look to find someone who embodies everything that she was looking for in Nevada’s new men’s basketball coach.

In fact, the ideal candidate was sitting just one seat away from former Nevada head coach Mark Fox on the Wolf Pack bench: associate head coach David Carter. Carter has spent the last 10 years as an assistant coach for the Wolf Pack, including four as Nevada’s associate head coach under Fox.

“I knew I was looking for a person with great integrity, basketball knowledge and experience, respect, enthusiasm, a great recruiter and one who understands and supports the mission of the University,” Groth said on April 3 when she announced that Carter would become the 17th head coach in Nevada men’s basketball history. “Both President Glick and I had conversations with David Carter, and we believe that Coach Carter exemplifies those qualities plus some that we need to move the University of Nevada men’s basketball program forward.”

While every head coach puts his own unique stamp on a program, Carter promises fans that the core values that have made the Wolf Pack basketball program so successful will not change.

“It is truly an honor and a privilege to have the opportunity to lead this program. I am thankful to everyone at the University and in this community for supporting me,” Carter said. “I’ve been here for 10 years and have been waiting for this opportunity. This program is not going backwards, I promise you that. The values and expectations are the same as they were last year and the same as they were 10 years ago. We expect three things from these young men: to graduate and walk away from here with a degree, to be great citizens in the community, on campus and on the court, and to compete and play harder than our opponents.

“I’m going to continue to recruit quality young men who are student-athletes, and we’re going to compete every year for a championship and the postseason. Those have always been our goals, and we are going to continue that. I’m built to win championships. I won in high school, I won in college and I’ve won here as a coach, so I expect to continue to win.”

Carter came to the Wolf Pack in 1999 after spending two seasons as an assistant at his alma mater, Saint Mary’s College, in Moraga, Calif. He also had coaching stints at Eastern Washington University and Diablo Valley Community College.

Carter played four years (1985-89) at Saint Mary’s, helping the Gaels to an NCAA Tournament berth, a 25-5 record and a No. 17 national ranking in 1989. A four-year starter at point guard and team captain, Carter also set the school record for career assists at Saint Mary’s, a record that stood from 1989-97, and currently ranks second all time for the Gaels.

Carter was inducted into the Saint Mary’s Athletics Hall of Fame in 2006. He received his bachelor of arts in liberal studies from Saint Mary’s in 1989.

Carter played high school basketball at Crenshaw High School in Los Angeles, one of the most prominent programs in the country. In three years at Crenshaw, his teams lost only five games and won state championships in 1983 and 1985.

—Rhonda Lundin, assistant athletics director for Media Services