Lyons ends Wolf Pack career as finalist for NCAA Woman of the Year

Former Nevada skier Katie Lyons ’09 (biology) ended her outstanding Wolf Pack career by being named one of the top 30 honorees and one of only 10 representing NCAA Division I institutions for the 20th annual NCAA Woman of the Year Award. The NCAA Woman of the Year Award honors female student-athletes who have distinguished themselves throughout their collegiate careers in the areas of academic achievement, athletics excellence, community service and leadership.

As one of the finalists for the prestigious honor, Lyons attended the NCAA Woman of the Year awards event in Indianapolis in October. As part of the event, the 30 finalists teamed with a group of local girls to plant a legacy garden at the NCAA Hall of Fame and attended a gala dinner hosted by ESPN personalities Jenn Brown and Jonathan Drubner.

“I was honored and humbled to be in the presence of such amazing, successful women, who I know are all making a difference in their community and individual fields,” Lyons said. “Moreover, I am honored to be a representative of the University of Nevada which has supported me in athletics and, more importantly, academics over the last five years. I can confidently say that the University of Nevada Athletic Department is the reason I have achieved my own success on and off the ski hill.”

A Reno native, Lyons excelled on the slopes despite being diagnosed with scoliosis and having back surgery when she was 15. She was a three-time NCAA qualifier and earned All-America honors in 2008 after finishing seventh in the women’s slalom at the NCAA Championships. She was named the Rocky Mountain Intercollegiate Ski Association Skier of the Week for Feb. 25-29, 2008 after winning the women’s slalom at a race just prior to the NCAA Regional. Lyons finished third in the women’s giant slalom and fourth in the women’s slalom at the 2008 NCAA West Regional. She was also an ESPN the Magazine Academic All-District selection and earned a prestigious NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship.

Lyons also became involved in Nevada’s Student-Athlete Advisory Council and dedicated her time to a number of community service projects during her collegiate career. She joined SAAC as a team representative at first and then moving through the leadership ranks, serving as treasurer, vice president and then president in 2009-10. Some of the group’s activities under her leadership included the Wolf Pack’s “adopt-a-soldier” project, a dance for student-athletes, more interactive Champs/Life Skills events and a teacher recognition program. Lyons also continued to work with her back surgeon to help other scoliosis patients deal with the condition and has volunteered at clinics and with doctors over the past several years.

After graduating summa cum laude with a degree in biology in May 2009, Lyons continued her collegiate career by pursuing a second degree in nutrition science in 2010. She was accepted into the University of Nevada School of Medicine and plans to pursue a career in orthopedics.

—Rhonda Lundin, associate athletics director for media services

Athletics Graduation Success Rate reaches all-time high

The University of Nevada’s Graduation Success Rate for student-athletes has reached its all-time high for the sixth year in a row.

Nevada’s student-athletes have posted an overall Graduation Success Rate of 75 percent, the highest mark in school history and up from its previous best mark of 73 percent in 2009. Nevada’s Graduation Success Rate has improved in each of the last six years, going from 63 percent in 2005 to 75 percent in 2010. The federal graduation rate for Nevada’s student-athletes, which doesn’t count transfer students, is 60 percent this year. That number has skyrocketed from 47 percent in 2007.

“Our student-athletes, faculty and staff should be congratulated for improving our Graduation Success Rate for the sixth year in a row and for the academic progress they continue to make,” University President Milt Glick said. “Our athletics program understands the importance of producing student-athletes who are as successful in the classroom as they are on the field, and I am very proud of this latest achievement.”

The current Graduation Success Rate is based on student-athletes who began full-time enrollment at any school in the fall of 2003 and received athletic aid in their first year of college.

The Graduation Success Rate was developed by the NCAA as part of its academic reform initiative to more accurately assess the academic success of student-athletes. Unlike the federal graduation rate, the Graduation Success Rate holds institutions accountable for transfer student-athletes, includes mid-year enrollees, and is calculated for every sport.

— Staff reports
Nevada prepares to ‘Move to the Mountain’

The University of Nevada has launched its Move to the Mountain campaign as the Wolf Pack prepares for the new challenges, exposure and opportunities that being a member of the Mountain West Conference will bring.

The campaign was kicked off during the Wolf Pack’s 34-31 football victory over third-ranked Boise State in November with the unveiling of a mobile giving program that allows people to donate $10 to Nevada Athletics by texting GOPACK to 20222. There is also a Facebook application that allows donors to make the same donation, which is then billed through the donors’ cell phone bills.

The Move to the Mountain campaign is a five-year fund-raising effort that will allow the Wolf Pack athletics program to continue to grow and sustain its long-term competitiveness as Nevada makes the historic move to the Mountain West Conference in 2012. Funds raised will be used to offset budget cuts and annual increases in the costs of doing business as well as provide the Wolf Pack the academic and athletic resources its teams need to be successful against the higher ranked programs in the Mountain West.

Nevada Athletics is currently ranked fifth in the Western Athletic Conference in annual expenditures and will have the smallest budget in the Mountain West Conference when the Wolf Pack makes that move in 2012.

“Our Move to the Mountain campaign is vital to the continued success of the Wolf Pack athletics program,” said Athletics Director Cary Groth. “Our move to the Mountain West Conference brings with it a lot of excitement and new challenges, and the support of our donors and the community, including many who will choose to give to Nevada for the first time through our mobile giving campaign, will be critical to giving our student-athletes and programs the resources they need to compete on the bigger stage of the Mountain West Conference and continue the legacy and tradition of Wolf Pack Athletics.”

For more information or to donate to the Move to the Mountain campaign, call (775) 682-6902 or visit www.movingtothemountain.com.

—Rhonda Lundin, associate athletics director for media services

Second Annual Blue Tie Ball to raise scholarship money set for Feb. 4

Scholarships for student-athletes are one of the biggest costs for the University of Nevada Athletics Department, and the latest special event, the Blue Tie Ball, will raise money to fund the scholarships that make the Wolf Pack’s success on and off the playing field possible.

Set for 6 p.m. Friday, Feb. 4 in the Tuscany Ballroom at the Peppermill Resort Spa Casino, the Blue Tie Ball promises to be an unforgettable evening of elegance, indulgence and fun to celebrate the success of Nevada’s student-athletes and to support the Wolf Pack program. The honorary chairs for the event are Joe ’78 (economics) and Liza Bradley ’96 (accounting).

The black tie event will feature hosted cocktails, themed vignette dining featuring four of the Peppermill’s restaurants, wine and beer tasting, dancing and a silent auction. Nevada student-athletes and coaches will also be on hand to meet guests.

Musical entertainment for the evening provided by local musicians, all of whom are members or graduates of the University of Nevada, Reno Music Program, and vocalist Eric Andersen, a former student-athlete.

Tickets for the Blue Tie Ball are $175 each and tables of eight are available for $1,400. The Peppermill is also offering room and spa packages for guests. Tickets and more information are available by calling (775) 682-6965 or logging on to www.nevadawolfpack.com.

— Staff reports