Wolf Pack baseball wins first Mountain West Championship

The Nevada baseball program’s 2015 season saw the first Mountain West championship and second-most victories in school history, and after all of that, the Wolf Pack wanted more.

The team’s disappointment in not being selected for an NCAA Regional after a 41-12 record and a conference championship is understandable. But it also takes nothing away from the accomplishments that did happen—and there were many. Moving forward, the record-setting season of 2015 will set the foundation for the program to build and grow.

Although the Wolf Pack had lofty postseason goals and worthy NCAA credentials, Nevada will settle for a massively successful regular season. Nevada was ranked in the top 25 for most of the season, posted the most wins in a season since 1995 and became the first team at the University of Nevada to win a Mountain West title.

“In a way, we feel that we set the standard. We established what Nevada baseball is about,” said sophomore outfielder Trenton Brooks. “I attribute a lot of the success of our program to our team chemistry. We are a unit on the field. We are a unit off the field.”

Nevada’s season got off to a hot start with an upset of fifth-ranked Texas Tech on the road and a 7-0 start, the most wins to open a season in program history. The Pack tallied seven win streaks of three games or longer and never lost more than two games consecutively in the regular season.

With the fan base behind the program, Nevada posted Peccole Park’s first sellout in program history on April 26. Nevada tallied 19 road wins on the season, which ranked second in the nation, and swept San Diego State and New Mexico on the road to clinch the school’s first-ever Mountain West title with three games left on the schedule.

Overall, Nevada finished the season with a 41-15 overall mark. Nevada’s win total was tied for second-most in program history. The Pack went 22-6 in Mountain West play to win its fifth regular season conference crown. Nevada went 19-9 on the road and 22-6 at Peccole Park.

The Wolf Pack’s stellar season as a team was bolstered by tremendous individual accomplishments. Nevada swept the postseason league awards. Sophomore Trenton Brooks was the inaugural winner of the MW Tony Gwynn Player of the Year award from the Mountain West—the Pack’s first conference player of the year since Kevin Kouzmanoff in 2003. Junior Christian Stolo was named MW Pitcher of the Year and Cal Stevenson was named MW Co-Freshman of the Year. And former coach of the Wolf Pack, Jay Johnson, won Coach of the Year honors.

Additionally, senior Austin Byler (1B), junior Ryan Howell (2B), senior Kewby Meyer ’15 (community health sciences) (OF), junior Bryce Greager (UTL/DH) and junior Adam Whitt (P) were named to the All-MW first team, and senior Kyle Hunt was...
named to the All-MW second team.

Collectively, Nevada averaged eight runs per game and ranked fourth in the nation in scoring. The Pack led the Mountain West in nearly every single offensive statistic, and also led the MW in team earned run average during the regular season.

With solid depth returning, a talented 12-player signing class and the innumerable successes of the 2014-15 season, the Wolf Pack has solidified a bright future for the program.

The next step for Nevada is finding the next coach to lead the Wolf Pack into that future as Johnson accepted a position at Pac-12 Arizona after the season.

“We wish Jay Johnson the best on his new adventure,” said Athletics Director Doug Knuth. “Our baseball program will keep growing and moving forward. We’re thankful for the contributions from a tremendous group of seniors and we’re excited for the great team coming back and the new additions to the program.”

For the student-athletes, the lack of the NCAA Regional bid this spring will prove to be a motivating factor going into next season.

“That was hard on our team,” Brooks said. “We’re proud of everything that we accomplished, and nobody can take that championship away from us. We are all happy for Coach Johnson and we’re excited to get a new coaching staff in here. We have a lot of motivation building for next season. We can’t wait.”

Quick hits

Kaepernick to Headline Governor’s Dinner

Colin Kaepernick ’10 (management), the standout San Francisco 49ers quarterback and one of the all-time great student-athletes in Nevada history, returns to Northern Nevada as the featured speaker of the 47th annual Governor’s Dinner on July 10 at the Governor’s Mansion in Carson City. Tickets can be ordered online at NevadaWolfPack.com/GovDinner. This event is expected to sell out. All proceeds from the Governor’s Dinner benefit student-athlete scholarships at the University of Nevada. For tickets or more information, call (775) 682-6901 or email WolfPack@unr.edu.

Byler, Mungedi Win Top Senior Awards

Baseball star Austin Byler and women’s basketball standout Mimi Mungedi won the 2014-15 Doc Martie and Ruth I. Russell Awards, respectively, as the University of Nevada most outstanding senior athletes. Student-athletes are nominated by their head coaches and must be in their final year of eligibility and in good academic standing.

“Austin and Mimi represent all of the great things about Nevada and have demonstrated excellence in competition, in the classroom and in our community,” Knuth said. “We’re proud of their achievements and their legacy with the Wolf Pack.” Mungedi was twice selected as the Mountain West Defensive Player of the Year and was taken with the 25th overall pick in the WNBA Draft this spring. As a senior, she was named to the All-Mountain West team and WBCA All-Region team. In his final season at Nevada, Byler capped one of the most accomplished careers in recent Pack history by being named to the All-Mountain West first team and Louisville Slugger All-American third team. The slugger batted .328 this season with 65 hits, 69 runs and 52 RBI. Byler posted a .321 career batting average and ranked fourth in Nevada’s record books with 40 career home runs and sixth with 211 career games played.

Trio Honored with Give Back Like Jack Award

Kaelie Reviglio ’15 (biology), Nicole Bus and senior associate athletics director Rhonda Bennett have been awarded the 2014-15 Give Back Like Jack Community Service Award. Bus, who just finished her junior year as a member of the Wolf Pack cheer squad, completed more than 100 hours of community service this season. She participated in nearly every activity for the Wolf Pack cheer team, which compiled more than 1,600 hours in 2014-15. Reviglio just completed her senior year on the Wolf Pack swimming and diving team and was active in her team’s community service events this season. Bennett coordinates all of the community service activities for the Wolf Pack student-athletes and helped Nevada win the 2015 Mountain West Student-Athlete Advisory Committee Community Service Challenge with 5,805 hours.

Lee Part of Sports Emmy-Winning Team

Billy Lee ’10 (journalism), digital media coordinator for University Athletics, recently won a Sports Emmy for his work as part of English Premier League coverage for NBC Sports Network. The Emmy, awarded in May, was for Most Outstanding Technical Team Studio. Lee was a broadcast scorebug operator and member of the graphics production team for NBC Sports in New York City prior to coming to work for his alma mater last year.

Nevada Boxing Named National Champs, Leads Big Year for Club Sports

In the increasingly competitive world of collegiate club sports, three University teams attained impressive achievements during their respective seasons, with a national championship by Nevada Boxing leading the way.

Nevada Boxing: With four boxers winning national championships in their respective weight divisions, the 2015 Nevada Boxing squad became the first since 1993 to bring the national championship title back to Reno. Jared Santos, was named Most Outstanding Boxer and will be recognized as the Amateur Boxer of the Year by the Nevada Boxing Hall of Fame in August. The team is coached by University alumnus Mike Martino ’80 (social service corrections), executive director of USA Boxing.

Wolf Pack Rugby: Competing in the Division IAA USA Rugby League, Wolf Pack Rugby made it to the College Sevens Championship for the first time. Battling in the Men’s Division I bracket hosted at the University of Denver, the team went 2-3 and ended up ranked No. 19 in the country for club rugby.

Nevada Lacrosse: Following its 2014 Western Collegiate Lacrosse League Championship, the 2015 Nevada Lacrosse: Following its 2014 Western Collegiate Lacrosse League Championship, the 2015 Nevada Lacrosse team was named the Conference Champions for the first time. The team returned to the NCAA Men’s Division II Lacrosse League Championship title in the Division II bracket hosted at the University of Denver, the team went 2-3 and ended up ranked No. 19 in the country for club rugby.
Mackay Stadium renovation

Initial construction on the $11.5 million plan to renovate Mackay Stadium began in April 2015 with the bulk of the project set to start after fall 2015.

Plans for the renovation include additional restrooms, new stadium club and loge seating and the addition of chairback seating in seven sections to improve the fan gameday experience. The plans also call for new ADA accessible seating areas, the widening of aisles and installation of handrails to increase safety at the stadium.

The project has been in the planning stages for nearly three years as athletics department officials have worked directly with fan focus groups and analyzed data collected in fan surveys. The new seating areas and amenities will result in changes to seven seating areas at the stadium—five on the west side and two on the east side—as chairbacks will replace bleacher seating. The east-side luxury suites will be expanded and the stadium will see the addition of approximately 200 stadium club seats and 38 loge boxes.

The restroom facility will be completed in time for this season, with the rest of the renovation at the 49-year-old stadium set for completion prior to the 2016 season.

For more information on the Mackay Stadium renovation, call at (775) 348-PACK or visit NevadaWolfPack.com.

LEFT: New theatre-style club seats. MIDDLE: Loge box seating. RIGHT: The ultra luxurious, 8,000 square foot members-only Stadium Club will offer a full-service bar and kitchen and serve as the new focal point of Mackay Stadium.
Student athletes succeed off the field

Excellence in the classroom has become a hallmark for University of Nevada student-athletes, and the spring semester was no exception. Forty-nine student athletes received degrees during the University’s 125th Commencement in May. This year’s crop of graduates represents all 16 of Nevada’s sports programs, with five members of the Nevada spirit program also graduating.

“Congratulations to all of our student athletes who are graduating this spring and summer,” said Doug Knuth, Nevada’s athletics director. “We thank them for their contributions to Nevada athletics and applaud them on achieving the ultimate goal of earning their degrees.”

In May, the University saw new heights reached in the NCAA’s Academic Progress Rate report, as 14 of 16 Wolf Pack sports met or improved their scores from last year, and all 16 met or exceeded the benchmark set by the NCAA.

The Wolf Pack’s volleyball team earned a public recognition award this year for ranking in the top 10 percent in the nation for its sport, the eighth time in the last five years that a Wolf Pack sport has earned public recognition. Nevada has met or exceeded the standards set by the NCAA and has been penalty-free in the history of the APR program.

“It remains a high priority of this University to help student-athletes achieve success in the classroom and stay on the path to earn their college degrees,” said University President Marc Johnson.

Wolfie Awards celebrate student athletes

Former Nevada softball player Jayme King ’14 (human development and family studies) gave a touching and memorable speech at the inaugural Wolfie Awards April 28 that received a standing ovation from the audience in Nightingale Concert Hall. King received the Inspiration Award, which will hereafter carry her name.

The event celebrated the athletic and academic achievements of Wolf Pack students, and was presented by Nevada’s Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) and the Nevada athletics department. Nine Wolfie Awards were voted upon by student athletes and presented alongside a number of academic achievements and honors.

The lasting moment was the tribute to King, who celebrating her 24th birthday the same day. King played softball for the Wolf Pack in 2011 before being stricken with Ewing’s sarcoma. She underwent chemotherapy and surgery, followed by another round of chemotherapy and a bone marrow transplant. She graduated from the University in December while battling another recurrence.

She was presented the inaugural award that bears her name. Moving forward, the Jayme King Inspiration Award will be presented annually to a Nevada student athlete who exhibits courage in overcoming adversity, whether it be in athletics, academics or life.

“Do something every day that you wouldn’t normally do,” King told a crowd of more than 600 students, parents and friends. “I sat in the seat you are sitting in as an athlete. I lived and breathed my sport. It was all I knew and nothing else could get in the way. When you hear ‘You have cancer,’ your life stops on a dime. If you can do it today, do it today. Don’t wait until tomorrow because life is the easiest thing to take for granted.”

King passed away June 9 surrounded by loved ones. The King family has established memorials at the Northern Nevada Children’s Cancer Foundation (www.nvchildrenscancer.org) and Family House in San Francisco (www.familyhouseinc.org).

Including 2015 spring and summer graduates, Nevada has seen 661 of its student-athletes graduate in the past 10 years.