“Duke has always lived and died by its starting five. Luckily for them, those five are usually all in the top 100 players in college basketball...”

Divers spring Jackets to win

The swimming and diving teams have finished their dual-meet season and are preparing for the ACC Championships at Tech.

By Patrick Odneal
Assistant Sports Editor

Junior diver Laurissa Prytaj set new school records on the one- and three-meter springboards to lead the swimming and diving team to victories over North Florida and Emory last Saturday. For her performance, Prytaj was named ACC Female Performer of the Week.

The women beat North Florida 186-106 and Emory 184-111. On Sunday the men’s team drowned Emory 179-118, completing a sweep for the Aqua Jackets.

On the men’s side, junior diver Tony Burkhardt broke a school record for the one-meter springboard with a score of 346.58. Burkhardt also finished first on the three-meter board with a score of 341.40.

Sophomore Ryan Bishop had a stellar performance, winning three events. He finished first in the 400-yard individual medley with a time of 4:01.99 and 10:10.51 respectively. Sophomore Vesna Stojanovska won the 200-yard fly with a time of 2:09.24.

The swimming and diving teams now have their focus on winning the ACC Championships, which will be hosted at the Tech Aquatic Center. The women’s championships are Feb. 16-19, and the men’s championships are Feb. 23-26.
Men from page 36 and get three teams that gel. We have a young team. The freshmen really stepped up and played well mentally. I was pleased with the team's performance, but we have a long way to go so because the ACC is one of the toughest conferences in the nation this year."

No. 25 Luis Muguruza, the Jackets' sophomore star, tamed the Tigers Darius Czaton by winning in straight sets (6-4, 6-4). The sophomore is now 11-4 in singles action on the year after going 9-6 as a freshman.

"He's going to have guys start to shoot at him now that he's getting his ranking up," Thorne said. "He was the underdog all of last year, and now he's had a few good wins as was can be expected. He's been more consistent this year, but he has a long way to go because it's still very early."

Sophomore Zachary Rath defeated Ashwat Sarohia in the closest contest of the event. Rath won in three sets (6-4, 6-5, 11-9), just squeaking by for the win. The sophmore teamed up with Scott Blackmon to chalk up a win in doubles competition as well.

"[Rath's] our team captain," Thorne said. "He didn't play well, but he stayed in there mentally. He won on a bad day, and that's something I like more than someone going out there and playing great tennis and winning. Anybody can win when everything is going good, but he was a bit off and fought through it. That was the match that I probably enjoyed the most out of the whole team match."

Despite their youth the Jackets are finding players to pick up the slack and play like the veterans. Freshman David North went 2-0 on the day after defeating Sarohia in straight sets. He also teamed up with junior Marko Rajevac to get one of the victories that the Jackets needed for the doubles point.

"We've got a deep team, but we can only play six through the dual matches, and we need to get other guys that can play throughout the year into the lineup." 

Kenny Thorne
Men's tennis head coach

Women from page 36 because the level of expectations are a lot higher. I think that everyone is geared up for a great season. Baylor was a good test for us. They have a deep team as well. I thought that was a good win for our program."

Earlier in the day Miller and Alison Silverton, the No. 16 pair in doubles as ranked by the Intercollegiate Tennis Association, clinched the doubles point for the Jackets with an 8-4 win. They defeated the Beart's Zuzana Cerna and Daniela Covello, ranked No. 9 nationally, to give the Jackets the first point of the contest.

"Most freshmen take a while to make the transition from junior tennis to the collegiate level, but [Miller] made that transition so quickly. She's adjusted in all facets of the college life, and she's playing some of the best tennis in the country. I thought it would take her some time. I knew that she was a great competitor in the junior ranks and also a very smart player. I thought it would take her a little while to see all of the other college players first and then she'd make some adjustments as she went along," Shelton said.

Miller, ranked No. 18 in singles play, defeated Baylor's No. 92 Saengsuwarn in straight sets. Miller won the first set easily, but she was unable to capitalize on the 5-2 lead in the second set. Saengsuwarn fought back and tied up the match at 5-5 before the two went traded sets to set up the tiebreaker. Miller finally won the match 8-6 and sealed the victory for the Jackets.

"[Miller] has really come out fighting and has a veteran mentality out on the tennis court," Shelton said. "I think the road is going to get tougher, and she will find some stiff competition as we go farther into our season. It'll be interesting to see how she deals with the tougher competition."

Dasha Poropova turned the match decidedly in the Jackets favor by defeating Klara Zrubnová (6-3, 6-2). The senior recorded 100 victories in her three years for Baylor before transferring to Tech. "I think she was pretty fired up," Shelton said. "She didn't leave there on the best of terms. I think she was excited to come here and have a new opportunity..."

Bryan Shelton
Women's head coach

"I think [Dasha] was pretty fired up. She didn't leave [Baylor] on the best of terms. I think she was excited to come here and have a new opportunity..."

The week before, the Jackets opened up the season with a victory over rival Georgia State 7-0. "I felt like we played well," Shelton said. "Last year they swept us in the doubles, but this year we aren't taking anyone lightly. I felt like we were ready for the challenge and played well."

Lyndsay Shoobo and Kacie Amos won 8-6 in their doubles match with the Lady Panthers while the other doubles matches were won with decisive victories. Georgia State's Binte Kowling forced Shoobo into three sets, but the junior closed out the contest with a win (6-3, 1-6, 6-4).

"Sometimes it comes that way," Shelton said. "The girls that were going up against her were ready to play."

In the other singles matches of the afternoon, all five other Jackets managed to record straight-set victories for the Jackets over the Panthers. The Jackets will be taking the week off before traveling to Columbus, Ohio on Feb. 15 to take on the Ohio State Buckeyes. "[Ohio State] is a good, solid Big Ten program," Shelton said. "We know that's going to be a good one. We are approaching the next couple of matches like a tournament. In a tournament you play each match one at a time, and we are looking at Ohio State being the first round of the tournament. The season gets gradually tougher as the season goes on before we get into ACC season. I'm looking forward to getting on the road and having our first road test."
Softball from page 36

son ranked in both polls and ended the year with a third-place finish in NCAA Athens Regional.

Tech finished with an overall record of 47-19 and is ranked in the preseason for only the second time in school history.

Florida State is the other ranked team from the ACC, at No. 11. The preseason rankings are once again dominated by Pac-10 powerhouses, who hold four of the top five spots in the poll.

“When softball first started at the collegiate level, California was the hotbed for talent and the Pac-10 schools gained early momentum. When you get that momentum and reputation, all the blue chip kids want to go there for the recognition. You kind of create a monster and then it just keeps feeding itself. But fortunately parity has taken over and there is more talent across the country, and now some other teams are gaining momentum,” Earleywine said.

That momentum has shown in Tech’s recruiting of another solid class.

“Recruiting is the by-product of the seasons that we had the last couple of years. It has gotten a bit easier and that has made it more enjoyable for coaches to go on the road and have Georgia Tech on our chests. Ideally I would like to keep in-state kids here, at least good ones. Georgia talent is definitely in the top 10 in the nation in terms of softball, and hence our first priority is to keep our local kids here. But make no bones about it, we are in the business of winning and if I have to go to some other state to get the right kid, I will do that,” Earleywine said.

Sallinger was Tech’s most decorated and honored player last season. She set new school records in wins (31), shutouts (15). ERA (0.82), no-hitters (3) and strikeouts (351). Sallinger became the second ACC pitcher ever to rack up more than 1000 strikeouts in a career. She needs just 13 strikeouts to become the ACC’s all-time strikeout leader.

For her remarkable achievements, she was named to the All-ACC team and the All-Southeast Region team for the second straight year. She was honored nationally for the first time as she was named to the All-American.

“When you get that momentum [from winning] and reputation, all the blue chip kids want to go [to your school] for the recognition.”

Ehren Earleywine
Softball head coach

With so much going on Saturday at Cameron Indoor Stadium, it’s easiest to break things down and look at the smaller parts that could be the key to a victory.

Guard: Tech is known nationwide for the dynamic duo of Will Bynum and Jarrett Jack. Combining for an average of almost 30 points a game, the pair has been on a hot streak of late. Quick, athletic and very strong for the position, there are few teams for whom Tech’s guards do not present matchup problems.

Duke pen J.J. Redick and Daniel Ewing on the wings, and either are a threat from anywhere on the court. Redick is arguably the best shooter in college basketball, shooting 93 percent from the foul line and displaying deep range.

Ewing is a versatile guard, adept at slashing to the basket and dishing to the open man, and he averages just over 16 points per game. He has taken over point guard duties for the Blue Devils this year.

Of course, a player some may have heard a little about, B.J. Elder, could shake up the evening as well. Assuming he doesn’t make an appearance, then the match-up is a toss-up.

Edge: Even

Frontcourt: Luke Schenscher is due for a breakout game, and he has been for some time. In fact, most of this season’s pundits and fans alike have been patient with the big Aussie, waiting for more of the brilliance he showed in last year’s NCAA tournament. He can rebound and block shots, and he is capable of being a force on the inside.

Isma’il Muhammad and Anthony McHenry are the glue of the team. Capable of defending four positions, the 6’7” McHenry is a versatile and talented defender, and he is the man that will do all the little things that help a team win. Muhammad’s acrobatics on both ends of the floor, as a clamp-down defender with startling quickness and athleticism and of course as Tech’s aerial specialist, make him a fan favorite. Nothing demoralizes an opponent more than his thunderous dunks, but nothing gives them more hope than seeing him come to the foul line.

At 6’10” Shavlik Randolph poses a problem for any defender because...
Sion excels as track prepares for ACC Championships

Assistant Sports Editor
Zeb Sion and Chaunte Howard won their events again to lead the men's and women's track teams at the Clemson Invitational last weekend.
Sion again surpassed his school record in the shot by throwing 59'0.75”.

"Coach Nat Page recruited Chaunte out of high school and definitely saw the potential in her to be a success at the highest levels. She's a very talented and versatile individual with great competitive desire. Coach Page works with Chaunte day in and day out to not only to continue her successes but to reach even greater heights," said Women's Head Coach Alan Drosky.

The women's team as a whole had another strong performance. "We took a limited squad to Clemson because we had two meets in the previous weekends and wanted to rest some people. Overall, we competed very well though," Drosky said.

In the women's triple jump, junior Brandi Depland finished with an NCAA provisional mark of 42'1.50”.

Dana Rogers and Fatmata Fofanah finished first and second respectively in the 60-meter hurdles. Fofanah ran a personal-best time of 8.47 in the preliminaries. Junior Kira Barcus cleared 10'11.75” on the pole vault, a season-best for her.

The women's 4x400 relay team of Ashlee Kidd, Antionetta McKay, Rogers and Lindsey Vincent won first place with a time of 3:56.06.

The men's team was also successful. "I am pleased with our effort and performances at the Clemson meet. It is common that there will be a fatigue factor around the third indoor meet of the year. We seemed to fight through that and got some positive things accomplished," Hinsdale said.

On the men's side, freshman David Sanders and sophomore Josh Hammel finished first and second in the 800 meters, running 1:59.28 and 2:00.71 respectively. Those were season-best times for both athletes.

Look for Sanders to be a contender for the rest of the season as he improves his time. "I have every expectation that he will make great strides in the next several weeks," Hinsdale said.

Two other men's athletes set season-best times in their events. In the 60-meter dash, senior Denalias Davis ran a 7.03, and freshman Jerome Miller cleared 6’9.75” in the high jump.

"Jerome Miller seems to be getting a good handle on the technique and approach..."

Grover Hinsdale
Men's track head coach

The track team is preparing for the ACC Indoor Championships. Today they travel to South Bend, IN for their final regular season meet.

By Patrick Odneal
Assistant Sports Editor

Jerome Miller seems to be getting a good handle on the technique and approach...

Grover Hinsdale
Men's track head coach

The men's and women's track and field teams compete in the Mevo Invitational today and tomorrow in South Bend, Indiana. Hinsdale mentioned that it is always a competitive meet, and the team looks to improve once again as the indoor season starts to come to a close.

"It is our last competition prior to the ACC Championships in two weeks. Our goal is to lineup, compete hard, put up some good numbers, and come out healthy and ready for the final preparations for the ACC (Championships)," Hinsdale said.

"We are looking forward to competing at the ACC meet and challenging for the team title as well as many individual titles. Also, we hope to continue qualifying individuals for the NCAA Championships in March, where we look to improve upon last year's 21st place effort," Drosky said.

The ACC Indoor Championships are Feb. 17-19 in Chapel Hill, N.C. The USA Track and Field Indoor Championships are March 3-5 in Boston, and the NCAA Indoor Championships are March 11-12 in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

The outdoor season kicks off March 19 at the Alabama Relays in Tuscaloosa, Ala.
Freshman Nnamaka already making mark

By Vishal Patel
Contributing Writer

Continuing the trend of impressive Swedish players who have taken their games to Tech, freshman Chioma Nnamaka feels right at home in Atlanta despite the lack of crowds and the absence of the cold weather of her native Sweden.

Softspoken off the court, Nnamaka is anything but quiet on the court. She has spoken volumes with her impressive game, which has been even better during ACC play.

Averaging a cool 15 points a game in the ACC, her scoring has pulled the Lady Jackets to a multitude of ACC wins this season, such as their ACC opener at Tallahassee against Florida State where Nnamaka shot 63 percent from the floor on her way to scoring 30 points and adding seven rebounds in the tough road test.

She points out that particular game as her best individual performance of the season. “That game I was really calm and relaxed, and I didn’t rush anything like I always do, like I am always so crunked,” Nnamaka said.

Pronounced SHOW-muh NAH-mah-kah, the Swedish star grew up in the small suburban town of Uppsala, which is only a 40-minute drive from the capital city of Stockholm. A city known for its plethora of gothic cathedrals and bicycles as the primary means of transportation, Uppsala also housed one of the Sweden’s most talented female basketball players in Nnamaka, the youngest of four siblings in a basketball-oriented family.

Nnamaka was born to a Swedish mom and a Nigerian dad, who Nnamaka said was up set to meet her mom. “A Swedish man in Nigeria, a professor of some kind I think, brought my dad up from Nigeria to Sweden to meet my mom. And yeah, our family has been in Sweden since then,” Nnamaka said. Nnamaka’s favorite thing to eat is Nigerian food prepared by her father.

Nnamaka started playing basketball at an early age. She first started playing after attending a sister’s practice in which the coach wished for her to practice along with the team. Afterwards, Nnamaka never turned back. “Nicknamed the ‘Scania Queen,’” former Tech women’s basketball player Jasmina Pecaric said.

Nnamaka progression and played against Sweden’s most elite competition, the Damligan League, by the age of 15. Despite being a freshman, she was one of the top players on the team, garnering major playing time. Before leaving Sweden, Nnamaka played in the Nordic Championship in 2003, a tournament that features the very best male and female amateurs around Scandinavia. It was there that she earned the reputation that elevated her to basketball royalty.

Nnamaka was not done making her impact on the courts in Sweden. From her hometown of Uppsala to Stockholm, she led three different teams, all different age groups, to capture the Swedish Championship three years in a row.

Toward the end of her short career in the Damligan, she was voted the MVP of the Swedish Championship game the same year that she was nominated to the all-star game in the Damligan League for the first time.

“From losing every game, we started winning because they were one of the top teams in the league already,” Nnamaka said. “They won the Swedish Championship two years before. From losing to winning, it felt great.”

Nnamaka now laughs looking back to winning the Swedish Championship as she recalls a specific moment. “I played against my sister, who was in the league as well, and beat her and it felt great. I felt sorry for her because she was crying, but she won it the year before so I guess it was my turn,” Nnamaka said.

The Swedes were not the only ones who saw the potential of young Nnamaka. Before deciding to take her skills to the friendly confines of Tech, Nnamaka was recruited by Minnesota, Miami, Pittsburgh and Southern University. One of the primary reasons she chose Tech was because of Coach MaChelle Joseph.

“Coach Jo came to Sweden, and Minnesota came, too, but it wasn’t the head coach. I loved Coach Jo when I met her, I connected with her and Tech, and it felt good,” Nnamaka said.

Nnamaka is not the first Swedish player to compete for the Jackets. In fact, Tech’s previous Swedish stars had an impact in her decision. “There are two Swedish players here, Nina Barlin and Jasmina Pecaric, and when Jasmina was about to graduate they were joking about how they were not going to have any Swedish players left anymore. I know Jasmina and she was also a friend of my sister’s and Jasmina told them about me and they started recruiting me,” Nnamaka said.

At Tech, Nnamaka looks up to Jessica Williams and the role she plays for the Jackets. “She leads the team; she takes a lot of responsibility, and she teaches how to be [a leader],” Nnamaka said.

Tech basketball looks to be in good shape with Nnamaka in the backcourt. She is the team’s leading scorer as a freshman and also rebounds exceptionally well for a guard.

Nnamaka has started to look towards the future, where she says that her first goal is to keep playing basketball after graduation. She wishes to play in the WNBA, the pinnacle of women’s basketball. If that cannot happen, she will move back with her sisters in Sweden and play there.

Majoring in International Affairs, Nnamaka has dreamed of being part of the police force one day since her childhood.

“After my basketball career, I want to be part of the police. I don’t know why, but I would like to be a detective,” Nnamaka said.
Superstar Sallinger leads softball

The Tech softball team starts the 2005 season with a head of steam and a positive attitude. With five starters returning to the lineup, including NFCA All-American pitcher Jessica Sallinger, the team will blend successful veterans with a new cast of players. The Jackets open their 2005 season at home against Chattanooga on Feb. 5.

The tough schedule includes ranked opponents such as Michigan and Southern Illinois in the Leadoff Classic, Florida State and rival Georgia. Postseason success was the main goal for second year head coach Ehren Earleywine when he planned the schedule. “[This schedule] will provide us with experience against those better teams, against better pitching, against better hitting. This will prepare us for the postseason,” Earleywine said.

Despite starting the season as one of only two ranked teams from the ACC in the preseason ESPN/USA Softball Collegiate Poll at No. 21, coach Earleywine remains cautious about the team’s chances of making it to the World Series.

“It would be safe to say that we would go to regional and we would finish in the top tier of our conference. It would be a stretch and more of a goal to get to the World Series,” he said.

Sallinger’s optimism is fueled by the strong showing of the team in the last three seasons. The Jackets made three straight NCAA tournament appearances and finished the last season in the World Series, “I don’t think anyone will be satisfied. We have been so close every year, it’s kind of disheartening. We are a better team this year,” Sallinger said.

Sallinger was named ACC Women’s Tennis Performer of the Week. Her optimism is fueled by the strong showing of the team in the last three seasons. The Jackets made three straight NCAA tournament appearances and finished the last season in the World Series.

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