A Perfect Season

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In a heart-stopping finish on a cold, clear December day in Salem, Va., the Linfield College Wildcats left no doubt about who deserved the NCAA Division III football title. With less than six minutes left on the clock, Linfield forced a turnover by the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. Riley Jenkins ’05, named the game’s outstanding player, made a one-handed grab of a pass from record-setting quarterback Brett Elliott ’06 to seal the Wildcat victory, 28-21. UMHB put a crimp in the Wildcats’ nation-leading offense, but the Linfield defense stepped up its attack to secure the college’s first NCAA Division III football title. This is Linfield’s first championship since the three NAIA titles in 1982, 1984 and 1986.

The Wildcats ended the season with a perfect 13-0 record, as well as a slew of awards for the players and coaches and a whole new set of records. Jay Locey, in his ninth year as head coach, was named NCAA Division III coach of the year, earning him a slot as an assistant coach at the Hula Bowl played Jan. 22 on Maui, Hawaii.

In receiving the award, Locey recognized his players, coaches and college administration.

“This is a championship for the entire Linfield family, of which we are very proud to be a part,” he said. “The 2004 team had commitment to each other and an unbelievable work ethic and attitude. Our guys have a great passion for the game and a great passion for the team. They play the game because they love it and they love each other. They are great human beings and really fun to be around.”

Team members displayed what true champions they are when they showed their compassion, caring and class during a visit to the pediatric floor at Community Hospital in Roanoke, Va. They read the children stories, played with them and went out of their way to visit those youngsters too sick to come to the playroom or those too shy to go to them.

Emily Painter, a nurse at the hospital, later wrote to Locey and Scott Carnahan ’73, athletic director.

“I watched your players come to our floor and I saw something that I have rarely seen from college men – compassion and concern,” she wrote. “I was truly touched to watch these men interact with our kids. The fact that your men would get on the floor and play house, basketball and build things and just take the time to spread some love and joy is a victory in itself. I hope that you are extremely proud and fond of this team, because they made a lasting impression on me and our patients. So not only are you national champions on the football field, but you are truly champions in life. Never let that spirit die.”
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Ty Smith ’05 celebrates with a championship t-shirt.

Left, Garrett Wells ’06 (48) and Phil Rombach ’06 celebrate the victory.

Riley Jenkins ’05, the game’s Most Outstanding Player, dives for a touchdown in front of Brad McKeehan ’06 (29) and George Carter ’05 (27).
This championship affirms Linfield’s commitment to excellence, said Linfield President Vivian A. Bull.

“I am so proud of our student-athletes,” she said. “Everywhere we went in Virginia, people commented on what a terrific group of players and coaches we had representing Linfield, Oregon and the Northwest Conference. Our players and coaches continue to receive many accolades, but it’s significant to note that this group of young people talk not about individual awards, but about the team.”

The Wildcats were not without their own boisterous cheering section during the championship game in Salem. A charter flight 141 family members, alumni and staff, including President Bull, to the game and back in less than 48 hours. Many others from different parts of the country also attended, giving the Wildcats a loyal and loud cheering section. Fans pitched in to help pay the costs to send the Linfield cheerleaders on the trip. Signs such as “ESPN – Exceptional Sons Prevail Nationally,” “Hit ‘Em Hard Linfield Linebackers” and “23 Zahn,” were sprinkled throughout the crowd. A bit of history was also on display. A Wildcat, to the game and back in less than 48 hours. Many others from different parts of the country also attended, giving the

ChampionshipDVD available

A DVD highlighting the Linfield Wildcats’ run to the championship is available for $22 through the Linfield College Bookstore. To order go to:

www.linfieldbookstore.com

Alumni Shorts

Family-style excursions

No time for a two-week European vacation? Shorter outings closer to home and fun for the entire family will soon be added. Watch the website for updates.

The Ecuadorian Amazon, June 4-19, led by Tom Love, professor of anthropology

Splendors of Italy, June 18-28, led by Allen Ericson, professor of English

Valley of the French Kings and the City of Lights, July 9-19, led by Sylvain Fremaux

Alumni Shakespeare Trip, July 14-17, led by Ericksen

Rafting on the McKenzie River, July 23-24, led by Greg Caster ’82 and Lisa Garvey ’86

Volunteer opportunities

Linfield offers a number of ways to be involved. Check out the website to learn about the Alumni Ambassador program, the Alumni Association Executive Board, the Career Mentor program, and reunions and events in your area.

Pencil us in

March 2: Alumni gathering, Los Angeles, Calif., hosted by Bob and Margaret (Zimmerman) Freeman ’51

March 3: Alumni luncheon, San Diego, Calif., coordinated by Mike Stelman ’63

March 4: Alumni luncheon, Palm Desert Resort Country Club, Palm Springs, Calif., hosted by Denis Walker, trustee

April 21: Alumni gathering, Boise, Idaho, hosted by Erik and Jennifer (Cutts) McLaughlin ’96 and ’95 at Taste wine bar

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