From Dream to Dynasty in Just Four Years

By Patrick Pierson, RMU '04

There was "The Perfect Storm" (starring George Clooney), the perfect Ten (from the movie "10" starring Bo Derek), the perfect game (Don Larsen’s was the most famous for the Yankees in the 1956 World Series) and the perfect cheer (consult local listings for reruns of that obnoxious skit on Saturday Night Live).

But what about the perfect career? There’s no kidding that Robert Morris University volleyball players Katie Noble, Julie Sector and Traci Zureick take top billing.

Four years ago, three bright-eyed Ohio-bred freshmen came to a Robert Morris team that had finished 6-23 the season before. In fact, the Colonials were a combined 35-83 (.297) in the four years prior to their arrival. They would play for a brand new head coach in Tim Horsmon who had zero collegiate head-coaching experience and arrived on campus just one day before the team’s first practice of the 1999 season.

None of this was exactly a pedigree for future success.

But this trio, along with their coach, would build enough friendships and memories to last a lifetime.

When Noble, Sector and Zureick came to Robert Morris, no one, except for them, knew the type of impact they would have. After four Northeast Conference championships and four NCAA tournament berths in four years, not to mention a combined team record of 97-50 (.660), that included a school-record 30 wins in 2001 and an astronomical four-year NEC mark of 34-2, it was apparent they had turned their dream into a dynasty. And perfection, somehow elusive for most of us in our everyday lives, was now a part of their sparkling collegiate athletic resume.

Katie Noble, a middle blocker from Mentor, Ohio, was nothing less than dominant in her four-year stint with the Colonials. Her power and enthusiasm instilled excitement, and she was a vocal leader.

"From playing volleyball, I’ve taken away a will for winning and a refuse to lose attitude in anything I do," says Noble.

Her winning attitude helped vault Noble into the RMU record books. She owns numerous all-time school marks including kills (1,418), attack percentage (.280), block assists (203) and solo blocks (133).

"Katie was one of the most dominant players in the conference," said Horsmon, who left Robert Morris in January to take the head-coaching position at the University of Dayton. "To win the league player of the year two seasons (2001 and ’02) in a row is quite an accomplishment. It shows that Katie not only has what it takes to reach the top but has the will and the drive to do what it takes to stay there."

Though her awards and accolades speak for themselves, the biggest award in Noble’s mind that she received was the friendship she built with her fellow seniors Sector and Zureick.

"We’ve become close friends by playing everyday and living together. It’s been an experience that I will treasure forever."

It’s rare to find freshmen who can step in and make an immediate impact like Julie Sector did. In her freshman year, Sector was named to the All-NEC second team as well as being named NEC tournament MVP.

"I’ve learned the value of hard work as well as working with others to achieve a common goal," says Sector. "My sophomore year was the most important because we had to come back and prove ourselves after coming out of nowhere to win the league title (in ’99)."

Sector, a Stow, Ohio native, broke into the Colonial lineup her rookie year as an outside hitter. Through her career, she became a defensive specialist and a tremendous ball handler.

"Julie was one of the best ball handlers in the NEC, and she understands the game as well as anybody," said Horsmon. "It was important that we all knew our roles as players and each of us came to play. We knew what it took to win, and nobody exemplified that better than Julie."

Sector ranks second all-time at RMU in digs (1,541) and second in games played (511), but, like Noble, she values the little things that she got from her experience. "We have the same friends and our families are so close that it’s brought us

SEE VOLLEYBALL (outside back cover)
Alumni Roundup...
Our Annual Look at the Robert Morris Teams That Reunited This Past Year

Three Robert Morris University alumni groups got together in 2002.
The men’s soccer alums got rolling with a golf outing and annual game against the varsity. Coming into the match, the all-time series was 2-2, and this year’s friendly was just as close, ending in a 3-3 tie. The alumni rallied for three straight goals by Brian Davis (‘97), Steve Bell (‘97) and Marco Pattucci (‘96). Also playing for the alumni were Doug Petras, Jason Keller, Tim Dougherty, Mark Ornowski, Pat Wisnom, Steve Carbonara, Kevin Cooke, Nick Goosen, Nate Bell, Matt Henson, Mike Clough, Clint Wisniewski, Jason DiFranco, Andy Masson, Kert Mease, Mike Clough, Lyaba Oulare, Graeme Eastgate and the event’s organizer Marco Ferrin.

Two weeks later, the women’s softball alumni squad took on the Colonial varsity. The alums are pictured at the right...front row (l-r) Annette Grimm, Sandy Dobran-Howard, Dawn Bauer-Geregach, Nicole Aloi and Tracy Frey. Back row (l-r) Coach Steve Reed, Erica Schwanke-List, Cori Merkel, Stephani Ehrenfeld, Natalie Aloi and Manager Dave McAdoo. As for the game, it ended in a 2-2 tie.

Finally, during Homecoming in late September, the football alums played an intersquad game, and it was again organized by Chris Longo.

Where Are They Now?

Joe Falletta

Joe Falletta played forward on three Colonial NCAA tournament basketball teams from 1988-92. He ranks 10th all-time in scoring and sixth in rebounding in school history. Today, the Library, Pa., native is the head boys basketball coach at nearby Hopewell Area High School. He’s held that position for eight years. By day, Joe is a production supervisor for Haemonetics Corporation which supplies automated blood processing systems. He graduated from Robert Morris in ’92 with a degree in business. A Colonial Athletic Club member, Joe lives in Aliquippa with wife Stacie (an RMU alum), sons Drew and Anthony and daughter Amber.

A Night to Remember...

RMU alum, board of trustee member and Colonial Athletic Club member Welling Fruehauf was honored at the Feb. 24 RMU men’s basketball game with the naming of a rowing shell, to be used by the Colonial crew team, in his honor. Fruehauf has supported RMU students in many ways. He supports the Colonial football program as well as the ice hockey club and several student activities. The RMU crew program took this opportunity to thank him for all he’s done on their behalf, that being having seen to their equipment needs. Fruehauf is pictured at right with Colonial crew coach Liz Jones (his right), RMU Athletic Director (far left) and several current and past Robert Morris rowers.
Q & A with Steeler Quarterback Tim Levcik

Tim Levcik was twice the Northeast Conference Offensive Player of the Year while with the Colonials. He was part of three NEC title-winning teams and two NCAA I-AA mid-major national championship squads. A four-year starter at RMU from 1998-01, he is the school record holder in passing yards (7,222), touchdown passes (76), pass completions (537) and pass attempts (970).

Q: What was it like to meet Dan Marino after you signed a free agent contract with Miami?
A: "We were at practice one day, and Coach (Dave) Wannstedt knew we were both Pittsburgh guys, so he introduced us. Dan told me, ‘Us Pittsburgh quarterbacks need to stick together.’"

Q: You might be competing with Gus Frerotte for a backup spot with the Steelers. You and he have some history together, right?
A: "We live three houses apart in Ford City (Pa). He once helped my dad put up a basketball hoop in our front yard. We’ve talked. He’s a great guy.”

Q: How do the next four months look leading up to training camp?
A: "Mandatory workouts take place in March and April. Mini camp is in May, and there are three to four more mini camps for rookies after that. Training camp starts in July, and that’s when it gets serious. There are 85 guys going after 53 roster spots. But having gone through it with the Dolphins, that will be helpful.”

Q: What was last year like without football?
A: "It was tough. I didn’t know how to react. I came to a few Robert Morris games, but I had been playing football every fall since I was 11.”

Q: Do you have yourself on any sort of timetable as it pertains to your football career?
A: "I’m only 22, and I didn’t have a redshirt year in college, so if it doesn’t work out this year, I may take one or two more shots with the arena league or in Europe.”

NCAA Rules Refresher...
As athletic boosters, it never hurts to keep in mind the rules of our national governing body.

You are a “representative of athletics interests” if you’ve ever been a member of any RMU sport support group or booster club, have made a donation to the athletic program, have ever helped arrange or provided summer employment for enrolled student-athletes or been involved in the promotion of RMU athletics in any way. A “prospective student-athlete” is a person who has begun classes for the ninth grade. The fact that members of the Colonial Athletic Club are representatives of athletics interests means there are several do’s and don’t’s when it comes to contact with high school and junior college coaches, prospective student-athletes and currently enrolled student-athletes. Questions? Contact the RMU Compliance Office at 412-262-8431.

CAC Highlights
*Membership is up 12.5% from last year. There are 135 Colonial Athletic Club members this school year. We’ve brought in $12,185 in dues alone this year. That is a 17% increase.

*The CAC Scholarship is now in existence, and we’re looking for applicants. To receive an application, contact assistant athletic director Marty Galosi at 412-269-4865 or galosi@rmu.edu.

*The 2003 CAC Golf Outing is Saturday, August 2 at Black Hawk Golf Course.

*The All-Sports Banquet is Sunday, April 13 at noon. Call 412-262-8295.
Colonial Softball Rolls Into 2003 Season

They say that "youth must be served." If that is true, then the 2003 version of Robert Morris University softball definitely will be served. A team which includes eight freshmen and five second-year Colonials is sporting a new look. And if head coach Craig Coleman has his way, it will be a new look with an old outcome...success.

Graduated from the 2002 squad are several seasoned veterans, including All-Northeast Conference righthanded pitcher Lauren Dickinson and first baseman Dana Knapp. If the 2003 Colonials are to keep the conference tournament qualifying streak alive (the squad has never missed since the event's inception in 1991), they will not only need to develop their youth, but they also will have to overcome the injury bug once again. Senior All-NEC catcher Vicki Goodnow and freshman phenom pitcher Amy Alol suffered preseason, year-ending arm injuries. Thus, all eyes will be on the squad's young players, who will blend with some experienced veterans, as the Colonials strive for another NEC title.

PITCHING
The only hurler on this year's team who saw mound time last year is sophomore right hander Erica Riggle. Riggle has made great strides since last season when she posted a 3.42 earned run average with 48 strikeouts in 84 innings. To keep opponents off balance when Riggle is not on the mound, Coleman will look to Brandi Doerschner and Kali Byers for a left handed/right handed mix. Senior Brandi Papiernik also will be summoned to the mound from her normal left field position.

CATCHING
Jen Noonan and Jess Givens, a junior and freshman, respectively, will backstop the RMU defense. Noonan brings considerable defensive skills and a steadily improving bat to the lineup, while Givens played on the 2002 North Allegheny High School team that won the Pennsylvania state championship.

RMU Visits Madison Square Garden
During the first week of February, the Robert Morris women's track and field team traveled to New York City to compete in the prestigious Verizon Millrose Games at Madison Square Garden. The team members, from left to right below on the floor at MSG (with head coach Michael Smith, center), were Suzanne Montecalvo, Krystal George, Smith, Modupe Akiwumi and Kerry McKinney.

Sophomore centerfielder Ashley Wood hit .281 as a rookie last year.

OUTFIELD
The outfield has the most depth and experience on the 2003 squad. Ashley Wood is an extremely speedy and accomplished slap hitter, while Papiernik is the team's only active senior. Maggie Pope, Liz Hart, Lacy Yaege and Nicole Holby also figure into the lineup.

INFIELD
Nowhere will the inexperience of 2003 be felt more strongly than in the rebuilt Colonial infield. Doerschner, who returns from a season-ending knee injury last year, will play first base, backed up by Malinda Anders. At third base, the freshman Byers will provide power at the plate and superb defense. The all-important shortstop position will be anchored by Tiffany Jack. Jack-of-all-trades freshman Keri Meyer will get much of the playing time at second base. Freshman Ashley Riggin, a teammate of Givens on the '02 North Allegheny state title winning team, also plays second base.

This article is an edited version of that written by 13th-year Colonial head coach Craig Coleman. Robert Morris was 2-9 at press time.

VOLLEYBALL...continued

together as a family. We have a common bond that will last throughout our lives.

"Traci was a great leader; she was very composed all the time," said Horsmon about Zureick. Zureick, of Cincinnati, brought a tough, veteran leadership to the floor and quietly became a team leader.

"Going undefeated my freshman year (9-0 in NEC play) really set the tone for my career," said Zureick. "It taught me that hard work really does pay off."

Zureick was awarded in 2002 with multiple NEC Player of the Week honors and capped off the season by being named to the All-NEC second team. She was a great all-around player who could play numerous positions and play them well. Zureick graduates as the Colonial all-time leader in digs (1,729) and games played (516). She also ranks second in service aces (150) and fifth in assists (1,026). Her career in her eyes will be remembered for the friendships and bonds she made. "We have grown so close to each other just by putting so much time into volleyball and wanting to be the best we could be," Zureick said. "Each of us has fond memories of what we've accomplished, and we will remember those forever."

Now, with these three having finished their four years, the Colonials will look to continue their dominance of the NEC with new bright-eyed players, as well as a new coach in Rob Thomas, himself no stranger to volleyball success.

"Their leadership and the precedent they set really distinguished them," said Horsmon of the three. "They were a group that played all four years and it's tough to replace winners."

These three might someday be replaced, but they surely will never be forgotten.