

Maret stays perfect with Sidwell contest looming

By **BRIAN KAPUR**
Current Staff Writer

When Maret's football team traveled to Brooklandville, Md., for its season opener at St. Paul's in September, the Frogs could have let the circumstances defeat them.

"We were playing an all-boys school with 70 kids [on the team]; it was 100 degrees on a turf field; we were late getting there because we were stuck in traffic on the Baltimore Beltway — every excuse was there," said Frogs coach Mike Engelberg.

Despite those challenges, Maret rose to the occasion. "We scored late to win the game. That game set the tone: This year was going to be different, and we weren't going to settle into our old habits."

This season has indeed been a different one for the Frogs, and the team has since pushed its record to 6-0 with a demolition of National Christian on Friday afternoon.

The Frogs' success this season centers around its strong seniors — Garrison Burnett, Coby Davis, Jovan Nenadovic-Simmons, Ethan Shimberg, Ola Faleye and Aaron Pray.

"The senior class — they were here as freshman when we had 17 guys [on the roster]," said Engelberg. "They work. They took the best pieces of the classes ahead of them and combined them. They run the show, and they're leaders. We have a lot of talent — when



you have talented kids, discipline and leadership, that's a recipe for a good team."

The team's leadership has pushed the squad to focus on conditioning. It's an area that previous Frogs had slacked on, and it showed when their small roster of 17 to 24 players would fade late in games.

"We really focus on our conditioning on Mondays," said Davis. "We take pride in it. We never let up during games, and we tell each other how important it is to push through and keep going hard."

Engelberg is proud of his team's commitment to the rough regimen.

"We will go out and do 45 minutes to an hour of the most brutal



Brian Kapur/Current file photos

Off to a 6-0 start this season, Maret will face its toughest test so far when it battles MAC rival Sidwell on Saturday. The Frogs are hoping for revenge after a pair of heartbreaking losses to the Quakers in 2015.

conditioning you can see," he said. "The kids thrive on it. On previous teams, kids wouldn't. They're taking it more serious, and they're in better shape."

That commitment has helped the team forge an identity of toughness. "These guys are tough, they're physical, and they hit relentlessly," Engelberg said.

The Frogs' offense is centered around Burnett, who is a dual-threat quarterback for the team. He has been a force running the ball, but when teams have tried to slow his ability to run or Pray's strong rushing, he has made them pay with passes to Nenadovic-Simmons and Davis.

"Garrison is throwing it really well and making good decisions,"

said Engelberg. "He is making people pay if they load up the box to stop the run."

Meanwhile, the Frogs' defense centers around Nenadovic-Simmons. "He's a phenomenal defensive player, and you take that skill set to offense, and he's great making plays," Engelberg said.

The Frogs' dominance this season showed on Friday, when they thrashed National Christian 47-0 behind Maret's vaunted dominant rushing attack. As a team, Maret racked up 342 yards on 24 tries and five touchdowns in that game.

Maret's potent ground game was led by Burnett, who bulldozed through the defense for 239 rushing yards and a pair of touchdowns. The Frogs also saw big

contributions from Jamal Glenn and Elijah Parks, who ran for 58 and 42 yards, respectively, as well as a touchdown each.

After the win, when the team gathered for its customary post-game chat with Engelberg, the coach coyly asked his players who they play on Saturday.

The team roared in unison: "Sidwell!"

The Frogs are already 1-0 in league play and control their fate in the Mid-Atlantic Conference with the heart of the schedule coming in the next three weeks. But the Sidwell game is one Maret has looked forward to since the schedule came out.

In 2015, the Frogs blew a huge See **Maret**/Page 10



Brian Kapur/Current file photo

Washington International's volleyball team has yet to lose a single set in league play and is eyeing a strong postseason both in the PVAC and the DCSAA.

Washington International volleyball dominates PVAC

By **BRIAN KAPUR**
Current Staff Writer

For years, Washington International battling Covenant Life was must-see volleyball in the Potomac Valley Athletic Conference.

But between the 2015 and 2016 seasons, the Cougars left the league, leaving the Red Devils rival-less.

Without their perennial threat to the PVAC title — either the Red Devils or Cougars have won the league crown over the last decade — Washington International has run roughshod over the PVAC and has yet to drop a single set against conference foes. The Red Devils have compiled an 8-0 mark league play — which has already given them the PVAC regular-season banner — and a 13-2 record overall.

"We have been rivals with Covenant Life since middle school; not being able to play them is a disappointment," said senior Marina Schechter.

Not having a threat in league play has allowed complacency to seep in at times during the season.

"It's hard. This year, we have been less focused as a team than in past years, and maybe it's because of Covenant Life. We are trying to pull it together for a run here," said coach Nick Loewen.

The Red Devils have also been dominant outside of league play. Against the Independent School League and D.C. Public Schools teams, Washington International has posted a 4-1 record. That success has also given them confidence that they could make a run in the D.C. State Athletic Association tournament at the end of the year.

"Now that Covenant Life isn't in our league, we are really looking forward to the D.C. tournament because that's where we can show our skills," said senior libero Pia Michelitsch.

The team's offense centers around senior setter Sara Tulloh, who consistently passes to set teammates up to terminate the ball and collect points.

"Sara is a veteran setter," said Loewen. "She has been our starter for two years, and she has really nice hands. She is the captain on the floor and a very consistent player."

Tulloh credits her teammates for finishing plays to help her notch assists on the stat sheet.

"We have great hitters, and it's easy because you know where they are," the setter said. "We talk to each other well."

The team has leaned on freshman Josephine Almekinders to provide a spark.

"Josephine starts as an outside hitter. She is a main offensive weapon," said Loewen.

The freshman's breakout performance has allowed Washington International to move Michelitsch, who stands at just 5 feet 2 inches tall, into the back row after she won the PVAC player of the year honor while playing at the net as a junior.

"Last year, she was an outside hitter because we didn't have anyone to put there, and she was the player of the year in the PVAC," Loewen said. "She's now back in more of her natural position. She is very talented wherever she plays."

The Red Devils will look to sweep the PVAC regular season with games at McLean on Thursday before tournament play begins later this month.



Brian Kapur/The Current

With its victory last Thursday, St. Albans has now won three of the last four IAC soccer championships. The Bulldogs will look to defend their DCSAA crown this week.

St. Albans repeats as IAC champions

By **BRIAN KAPUR**
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St. Albans captured the Interstate Athletic Conference championship last week for the second straight season, defeating Landon 2-0 on Thursday afternoon at the Bulldogs' home field.

The win gave St. Albans a physical IAC trophy, the first time the conference introduced hardware to go along with the title.

"We are incredibly happy to put our names there," said Bulldogs senior Matthew Teplitz. "It's a great feeling to have a tangible item to put our names on. There's no substitute for scoring on your home field in a championship against your biggest rival."

Part of the foundation for the Bulldogs' title run was laid three years ago. When Teplitz first came to St. Albans, he planned to go out for the Bulldogs' football team but a classmate, Sam Gunthe, talked him into trying soccer instead.

Teplitz indeed opted for the other football. After a disappointing freshman season, then-St. Albans coach Hart Roper gave him some life-changing advice.

"He told me to go out and play competitively, and that summer I found a team," said Teplitz. "After not playing a single minute my freshman year, I started every game my sophomore year. It gave me a group of guys and experiences like this one that I will cherish forever."

Teplitz's dedication showed on

the championship stage Thursday when he took a perfect pass from freshman Mikey Brady and finished to put the Bulldogs ahead 1-0 early in the second half.

"It's a lot of practice," said Teplitz. "There is no substitute. You can watch film or talk about tactics, but there is no substitute for getting to the field in July and August. That play was just us working together as a team, Mikey making a good pass and me just following through."

Later in the half, St. Albans put the game out of reach when senior Sam Lalor dished a cross to sophomore Harry Moore, who buried a shot to push the advantage to 2-0.

"We had a nice play, and I was

just able to finish," said Moore. "I was just trying to treat it like another game. When it went in, I couldn't think."

The Bulldogs have now won three of the last four IAC soccer championships and will look to add more hardware before the season ends with the D.C. State Athletic Association tournament this week. St. Albans enters as the defending DCSAA champions as the No. 3 seed. The DCSAA title game will be played Saturday at Catholic University at 8 p.m.

"We are excited about the potential this week has," Teplitz said. "As a senior I'd like nothing more than to go out with another championship."



A clean sweep: Red Devils dominate PVAC en route to volleyball title

By **BRIAN KAPUR**
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In volleyball the sign of a good team is one that can win a match in straight sets. A dominant team can do it several times a season, but a special team can run through its entire conference schedule and never drop a single set.

Washington International's volleyball team falls into the last category after pulverizing Oakcrest 3-0 last Wednesday at the Field School to win the Potomac Valley Athletic Conference championship. The Red Devils completed a season sweep of its league in the process — never dropping a set through their 12 conference games including the postseason.

For Washington International, the title game missed a little flair without the school's biggest rival: Covenant Life, which left the PVAC prior to this year.

"We always look forward to playing Covenant Life in the finals, but to still have the opportunity to play a good team and to leave it all out on the court is amazing," said senior middle Marina Schechter.

The championship match was never in doubt as the Red Devils won with set scores

of 25-3, 25-8 and 25-19.

The Red Devils' senior defensive specialist Aitana Vargos-Llosa was named the player of the championship match last

Wednesday.

"It was completely unexpected," she said. "I don't even know what to say. I just put it all on the court."



Brian Kapur/The Current

Washington International's volleyball team didn't drop a set in any PVAC game this year.

The victory caps off Washington International's dominant run through its conference foes. The Red Devils thrashed PVAC opponents by combined set scores of 902-409 — while having an opposing team score 20 or more points in a single set just one time in its 12 league games.

"It's an amazing way to end our volleyball career at WIS," said senior setter Sara Tulloh. "It boosts our confidence for other games. We stayed up at our level, and it will help us moving forward."

The team's championship run was led by senior Pia Michelitsch, who was named the PVAC player of the year for the second consecutive season. "It's nice to do it at my normal position because I can play my best there," said the senior, who played out of position because of team need in 2015.

Washington International will now turn its attention to the D.C. State Athletic Association tournament, where it holds the coveted No. 1 overall seed.

"We are so excited," said Schechter. "We were very surprised [to be the top seed]. It's really exciting, and we all look forward to D.C. states because it's a time where we can showcase our talent against really, really good schools."