

SPORTS

WestWord

Bulls need to amp up intensity

w Daniel Blazek
Staff Writer

"He is going to have a huge impact on the team, mainly because he is their best player now," sophomore boys' basketball head coach Eric Leuder said of Chicago Bulls' rookie point guard Derrick Rose.

"He can limit the turnovers, create open shots for teammates and be the actual point guard that the Bulls haven't had for a long time," he said.

It is November, hoops fans, which means that the National Basketball Association (NBA) season has kicked off again, with guards making it rain from the three-point arc, perfect passes and high-flying dunks that leave us staring with our mouths agape.

The Bulls are going into the new season, coming off of a 33-49 record last year, which snapped their consecutive playoff appearance streak at three. Articles in numerous magazines and websites (e.g. *Sports Illustrated* and www.espn.com) state the writers' opinions about whether the Bulls will play horribly or decently this year.

An article on www.yahoo.com states that in order for the Bulls to succeed, they need a dominant center, better shooting and an overall better sense of teamwork. It is possible for them to make a good run, but with what they looked like last year, they have a lot of work to do. One factor, however, can keep this team together, say the experts: Rose. Most analysts agree that Rose is the answer that this team needs, and people in the school would concur. Instead of merely relying on what

pundits say, *West Word* asked members of the school community for their opinions.

"I think [small forward] Luol Deng will definitely improve this season, along with [shooting guard] Ben Gordon if he continues to master the sixth man role," senior Fred Choute said.

Surveyed students agreed with Leuder that Rose will make a difference for the Bulls and gave their perspectives on what the team needs to improve on this season, regarding the players and their new head coach, Vinny Del Negro, who has no previous coaching experience.

"As for Vinny [Del Negro], I think he will be able to take control of this team and be one of the better new coaches."

Junior Adam Provost and sophomore Kate Busch agree to a certain extent about the coaches and players.

"[Center] Aaron Gray will be better this year," Provost said. "Their coach will have a rough first year, but after that it will be a little easier for him."

Bush remains cautiously optimistic.

"They aren't going to do very well this year, but I still think they will do a little better than last time," Busch said.

The *Sports Illustrated* article predicts that the overall record of the Bulls this year will be better, but not enough to be a threat, saying they will end an even 41-41 record and no playoff appearance.

As for students and staff, Leuder, Choute, Provost and Busch predicted that the team will go 38-44, 43-39, 45-37 and 40-42, respectively, with only Choute and Provost saying they will get

a seventh or eighth seed in the playoffs at best.

The Bulls, currently amidst their infamous, yearly "circus trip," next play tomorrow night at 7:30 p.m. in San Antonio vs. the Spurs, televised locally on Comcast Sports Net.



Luol Deng dunks the ball against Dallas Mavericks' Dirk Nowitzki
Photo courtesy of ASNEKRT campus.

Gremley weighs Division I offers Wisconsin, Indiana and Michigan among suitors

w Sarah Espinosa
Sports Editor

Soon to be a starter for her third year on the varsity softball team, junior Jaelyn Gremley is going to be a key player for the 2009 and 2010 seasons. Gremley is a three-sport athlete, also playing varsity volleyball and varsity basketball since her sophomore year. Recently, Gremley has been contacted by numerous National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I schools for her amazing talent in softball.

"It is mind blowing," Gremley said. "I knew I wanted to play in college, but this is amazing. I love it."

On her list of schools are the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Indiana University-Bloomington, Central Michigan University, University of Michigan and University of South Florida.

"I would probably say I want to play at the University of South Florida," she said.

Gremley's work ethic induces teammates and coaches to look upon her highly.

"[Gremley] is amazing," junior captain and starting varsity pitcher Julie Schwenk said. "I love playing with her; she always knows what to do and how to keep her cool in a tough situation. I feel confident knowing she is my third baseman."

Last season, Gremley's batting average hovered near .400, and the third baseman committed no errors, statistics not lost on her coach.

"[Gremley] is a phenomenal player; she always works hard on and off the field and really works well with the team," head coach Stephen Ramseyer said.

Gremley agrees that teamwork is a large factor for the game, especially at Niles West.

"West always comes together; sometimes softball can drift into being a single person sport, and that is when problems start, but this team always comes together," she said.

Gremley's excellence extends beyond school as well. She is a part of the 16-and-under, Oak Park Windmills team. "It really isn't that different from the school; we just travel more often and farther. The competition varies—sometimes it is harder, the same or easier than our school conference," she said.

After falling one win short of a regional championship last year, Gremley wants to go farther.

"It would be awesome if we could win regionals and [sectionals] this year. Last year wasn't the best. Our record wasn't too hot, but we knew we had to come together and really try, and we did. Sometimes, skill just [prevails]," Gremley said.

Look for Gremley this season on the basketball court and, next, look for her breaking some more records on the softball field.

"I expect her to do very well in college, academically and athletically," Ramseyer said. "She works on her school work and athletic skills 24/7."



Gremley

New administrative team benefits student-athletes



New administrative team benefits student-athletes

w Sarah Espinosa
Sports Editor

While one Niles West sports season comes to an end, another begins. Recently, the athletic department has run extra smoothly due to the Niles Township District 219 Board of Education's inspired decision to separate the previously combined athletic director (AD) and health and wellness director (HWD) positions.

With Paul Swanson handling the academic side at both West and North, West's new AD David Rosengard already has shown loyalty and dedication to our athletic programs, devoting ample time and energy to each 2008 fall season team. I hope to see his commitment to athletics continue through upcoming seasons.

It was difficult to know the difference between the two positions when they were one job. Now that the positions have been separated, it is obvious that the obligations and demands of each position made it vital to split the duties.

With Rosengard devoting all his efforts to West athletics, students on sports teams feel more secure when they see Rosengard at the games and in the training room. When a student-athlete sees someone so dedicated to make sure that our fields look up to par, to ensure that trainers serve athletes' needs and to pay attention to all the little details that allow coaches and players to perform, it makes him/her feel that much more appreciated.

One of Rosengard's most exemplary actions is visiting players who are injured. Rosengard finds them in the training room to

When a student-athlete sees someone so dedicated...it makes him/her feel that much more appreciated.

see how they are doing. It seems like a little thing, but take it from me—I rehabbed my tendonitis-afflicted knee for a month—it makes a player feel that someone really cares—even if one is not contributing or if one's team doesn't have a winning record or plans to go to regionals. He values our well-being and makes himself seen. This is important in gaining the trust and respect of the student body. His hard work is noticed among the student-athletes.

Along with athletics, our physical education programs have taken off as well. With more time to focus on just one assignment, the new HWD has implemented programs that are better than before. Swanson has put a strong emphasis on incorporating cardiovascular activity in our wellness program along with improving our fitness test results. I support his focus as obesity continues to increase in children and young adults. Swanson also appears to be trying hard to diversify physical wellness options for juniors and seniors.

Having seen the two positions work so well and the amount of effort involved, one wonders how one person handled it all. Kudos to former AD/HWD Steve Heurman for handling an impossible job to the best of his ability. I think that I speak for many students in saying that I am grateful for his hard work and dedication.

Now that the benefits of the changes have become apparent, one wishes they had been done sooner. Nevertheless, the school board is to be commended for its vision in making physical education/athletics a more positive experience.

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SPORTS

Elder Mendenhall hopes football odyssey ends in NFL

By Rexly Penaflores
Managing Editor

Five years ago, he was the toast of Skokie, the first Bowl Championship Series conference-bound football recruit in decades. Over the course of his college career, he became “the other Mendenhall.” However, 2004 graduate Walter Mendenhall has finally stepped out of younger brother and Pittsburgh Steelers running back Rashard’s shadow into the spotlight.

For Mendenhall, the dream of becoming a starting running back that he took to the University of Illinois in 2004 has finally become a reality—60 miles away at Illinois State. Installed as a starter a few weeks ago, fifth year senior transfer Mendenhall led the Cardinals to a 54-44 win against Youngstown State. In the win, Mendenhall rushed for 225 yards and three touchdowns, far and away career highs.

Although the Cardinals will limp to the end of the season with a losing record, Mendenhall has distinguished himself. In addition to the Youngstown State win, he rushed for 106 yards and three touchdowns in a 48-45 shootout at Western Illinois.

Despite not playing in the first three games and not starting the first seven games, Mendenhall trails team leader Geno Blow by only six yards rushing with 640, and he leads the team with 11 touchdowns.

The road to Mendenhall’s current success was paved with hardship and controversy. After being red-shirted his true freshman year, he was shuttled between offense and defense during his first two seasons on the Illini varsity, relegated primarily to special teams. In his junior year, he saw action in only two games.

After his younger brother Rashard Mendenhall left Illinois for the National Football League (NFL), Illinois coach Ron Zook decided to put Walter out to pasture.

“I felt that [Illinois] did not have any loyalty to me. After a while, they decided they wanted me back on the team, but by then, it was already too late,” Mendenhall said.

After Illinois, Mendenhall decided to go to Illinois State at the recommendation of a friend who went to Niles West along with Mendenhall. At Illinois State, Mendenhall trained hard in order to get the starting position.

“I knew that it was a hard decision for the [Illinois State] coaching staff since it was my last year there, but they felt that I



Walter Mendenhall rushes to gain some of his 225 yards in the game against Youngstown State. Photo courtesy of Dennis Banks, Illinois State University

could take the position because I trained hard for it,” Mendenhall said.

In the aftermath of his first career start and a career high in rushing yards, Mendenhall talked about the long road he has endured.

“I feel so blessed that I can finally be in the starting position. This has been a long time coming and I am so happy that I got the position.”

Although Mendenhall received a bachelor’s degree in sociology

at Illinois and is studying for a history degree at Illinois State, neither of those degrees will help him get where he wants to go after college, the NFL, a dream that seems more in reach, given his recent success.

“After college, I really want to train hard for the NFL. I hope I can make a big influence in the combine, and I hope to get looked at by some really good teams. I don’t have a preferred team at the moment. I just want to look at the combine, and after that, I hope to be playing for a professional team,” Mendenhall said.

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