

Raptors Rapture

THE RUTGERS-CAMDEN SOFTBALL TEAM WINS IT ALL

It's not hard to imagine pitcher Michelle Schlichtig rolling her eyes as she recounts her coach's favorite story on the phone: "At least once a week, Carl would tell us that three days after he was hired, he was out looking for students because the season was opening in three days, and he didn't have enough players, so he ended up with a left fielder with one eye and a 37-year-old shortstop. The man is just too funny."

Rutgers-Camden head softball coach Carl Taylor, who won a grand total of three games in his first two seasons in 1996-97, may have a new favorite story to tell: becoming the first Rutgers-Camden team to win a national title and the first Rutgers team to win an NCAA team title since the Scarlet Knights fencing team shared the crown with Army in 1949.

In the World Series championship game in Raleigh, North Carolina, in May, Taylor's Scarlet Raptors twice rallied from one-run deficits against their longtime nemesis, national champ University of St. Thomas in Minnesota. Clinging to a 3-2 lead with the tying run on third base in the bottom of the seventh inning, the 22-year-old Schlichtig delivered a strikeout, a dramatic end to her All-American career. "It was such an unbelievable feeling," recalls Schlichtig, a sociology major. "Everybody was crying and jumping for joy."

Schlichtig and her teammates give much of the credit to Taylor, their families and friends, and a large contingent from the campus that drove the 350 miles to Raleigh to cheer them on. "Carl kept us loose and focused, and we would not have won without him. He took a group of amazingly diverse characters and turned us into a family. I can't say enough about the support we received; our fans were just amazing."

While the Raptors entered the championships ranked third in the country and completed their season at 47-5, Schlichtig says "this year we added a little more talent and depth, but we also seemed to get some of those close

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calls and breaks that hadn't been going our way in previous years." Schlichtig, who hopes to coach a team of her own one day, posted a 32-3 record for the season; the team had a 118-24-1 record over her three-year career.

On top of the championship, Taylor was named New Jersey Athletic Conference Coach of the Year for 2006. "Every single kid on this team made a diving catch or got a big hit or made a great base running play," he says. "Michelle was pivotal, but it truly was a great team effort. For everyone, the recognition has been unbelievable; words cannot express what it means to reach the pinnacle."—BG



Michelle Schlichtig (front left) and her teammates bonded to win a national title.

Basketball

NBA Hall of Famer Earvin "Magic" Johnson stopped by the RAC last spring to address the men and women's basketball teams. "This ball has taken me around the world," he told the teams while holding a basketball. "You're going to have some of your greatest moments with this ball. It's going to take you through the ups and downs."

Men's Basketball

Senegal native Hamady N'diaye (En-JY), a 6'11", 235-pound center and consensus Top 100 recruit who played at Stoneridge Prep in Simi Valley, California, will play for the Scarlet Knights this season.

The Sacramento Kings selected guard Quincy Douby as the 19th pick of the first round in June's NBA Draft. Douby, the first Scarlet Knight to be selected in the first round since the Cleveland Cavaliers chose Roy Hinson LC'83 in 1983, averaged 25.4 points per game last season.

Baseball

The Scarlet Knights baseball team returned to the Big East Conference Championship for the first time in three years, winning two games in the tournament and eliminating second-seeded Connecticut along the way.

Women's Crew

Scarlet Knights sophomore Kaitlin Coulter was named to the Collegiate Rowing Coaches Association Mid-Atlantic Region first team.

Softball

Senior third baseman Jen Raido is the first Rutgers-Newark softball player named to the All-New Jersey Athletic Conference first team since the two-division format was merged in 2000. Raido hit .397 with 23 hits, including three triples and a home run.