

By Jason Ermigarat, Director of Sports Information

# PLNU Sports

## *Lady Crusaders Basketball Finishes Fifth in the Nation*



entered into the contest as an underdog, despite having a better record. However, when it came time to play, the Lady Crusaders paid no attention to their seeding as they shot 50.9 percent from the field and

**T**he 2002-03 Lady Crusader basketball team recently completed the most successful season in school history. After finishing the regular season in second place in the Golden State Athletic Conference (GSAC) with a conference record of 16-4 and a national ranking of 18 in the last NAIA poll of the season, the team was ready for an outstanding post-season run.

Despite losing in the semifinals of the GSAC postseason tourney for the third time in four years, the women were awarded an at-large berth at the 23rd NAIA National Women's Basketball Tournament in Jackson, Tenn. The berth in the 32-team field was only the second time in history that a Point Loma women's team had been awarded the honor.

The Lady Crusaders earned a #5 seed in their bracket while their first-round opponent, Campbellsville University, was the #4 seed. Point Loma

forced Campbellsville into 27 turnovers as they went on to post a 71-49 first-round victory.

The 22-point victory moved the Point Loma women into the second round game where they faced #1 seed and #3-ranked Houston Baptist University.

It was evident the Lady Crusaders were out to make a name for themselves and for PLNU. Their 75-68 win over Houston Baptist in the second-round not only sent the #1 seed packing but it also thrust Point Loma into the Elite Eight for the first time ever.

Point Loma scored the game's first six points and never trailed on the way to knocking off Houston Baptist (33-4). Lady Crusader sophomore guard Jessica Mercado scored 16 of 22 points in the first half to pace PLNU to a 39-23 halftime lead. The Huskies rallied to within three points twice in the second half but could get no closer. Six-foot-three junior center Zaneta Drungilaite took over the scoring load for Point Loma in

the second half with 16 of her game-high 23 points to help the Lady Crusaders hold off the Houston Baptist comeback bid.

The Lady Crusaders season came to an end the next night as they went up against a talented Southern Nazarene University team. SNU's Crimson Storm eventually went on to win the national championship by defeating four-time champion Oklahoma City University.

The Lady Crusaders finished the season at 27-9 with their 27 victories being the most wins by any team in PLNU history.

Senior Erin Kellar was named NAIA All-American and team M.V.P. for the fourth consecutive season as she ended her playing career as one of the most decorated players in PLNU history. Drungilaite, in her first season at Point Loma after transferring from Weatherford Junior College in Texas, was an Honorable Mention All-American while senior Corey

Zimbelman was honored as an NAIA Scholar Athlete.

With the foundation set, the Lady Crusader basketball team will definitely be one to be reckoned with as seven players will return for the 2003-04 season. ♦

*(Below) Six-foot-three junior center Zaneta Drungilaite took over the scoring load for Point Loma.*



## Fast Retool by Wilmore Sends Point Loma Men's Team to Tourney

A year ago, Point Loma's men's basketball season was over almost before it began. The Crusaders finished near the bottom of the GSAC standings while earning the second worst record in school history at 5-27.

When veteran coach Art Wilmore elected to leave his post at Christian Heritage College to accept the challenge of rebuilding at PLNU, most believed it would take him a couple of years to construct the Crusaders into contenders.

Wilmore works fast. In his first year at the reins, he directed the Crusaders to an amazing turnaround, compiling a 22-11 record to gain a berth in the 66th NAIA National Championship Tournament.

Despite bowing out in the first-round to #4-ranked Georgetown College, the quick turnaround has PLNU fans already looking toward next season and the magic Wilmore and his troops will provide.

Before the early exit against Georgetown, Wilmore said, "We're excited about being here. The key to our success has been at the defensive end. That, and our kids have adapted to the roles we've put them in."

Andrew Lasker, who was a freshman for Wilmore's Christian Heritage team and is now wearing PLNU's green and gold, earned distinction as the GSAC's leading rebounder this

season with an average of 9.7 per game. Lasker was also the team's second leading scorer at 15.5 points per game behind fellow junior teammate Trent Berglund's 15.9 points per game.

With a 23-point loss to Georgetown, the Crusader men finished the season at 22-12, quite an improvement from a year ago. With the 20-plus win season this year, Wilmore has now won twenty or more games in his past seven consecutive seasons of coaching.

The Crusader season was full of memorable wins, including back-to-back victories against NCAA Division I Loyola Marymount and #16-ranked Biola University. The 73-71 win against Loyola Marymount was one of the biggest wins in recent school history.

After not having a single player on the All-GSAC squad last year, two Point Loma men found themselves among the conference elite this season. Lasker and Berglund were both honored as All-GSAC selections while both players were also named NAIA All-Americans.

The Crusaders return a large nucleus of players for the 2003-04 season that includes Lasker and Berglund along with freshman point guard Corey Thomas. A talented recruiting class along with nine returnees could possibly make Point Loma the team to beat next season. ♦



The men's team got great support at the NAIA tournament this year from members of previous PC/PLNU's men's teams. (Top row, left to right) Ben Foster, John Anderson\*, Art Shingler, Andrew Lasker\*, Daryl Nicholson, Trenton Berglund\*, Don Bradford, Coach Art Wilmore\* and Keith Wiseman. (Bottom row) Harold Cartwright, Brad Heinrichs\*, Bill Olin, Jim Poteet and Chalmer Cartwright.

\* = 2003 team

### PLNU Women's Auxiliary—San Diego Chapter

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Birthday: \_\_\_\_\_

Campus Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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- Cake:  white  chocolate  spice  
 Frosting:  white  chocolate  caramel  
 Cookie cake:  chocolate chip  
 peanut butter  brownie

Send check payable to PLNUWA to: **Sharon Irwin, 3900 Lomaland Drive, San Diego, CA 92106.** Please allow at least two week's notice.