A Record-Breaking Year for Baseball

It is fitting that legendary baseball manager Joe Torre delivered the Commencement address to undergraduates in May. Torre, owner of four World Series rings, knows how to win. He had set foot on a campus whose baseball team was savoring winning like never before.

The 2014 University of Hartford baseball team finished the regular season with a 30-21 overall record, 16-7 in America East, breaking a program record for victories set in 1988 (29). It was the first time in 20 years—just the fifth time in 57 years—of UHart baseball that the Hawks recorded more than 20 wins in a season. The most recent 20-win season came in 1994.

The Hawks were ranked second in the final Division I New England Intercollegiate Baseball Association poll published by the organization on May 19. The poll, released weekly over a nine-week span, is voted on by select coaches from throughout the region. Hartford was ranked only below Bryant and ahead of in-state rivals Fairfield, UConn, and Central Connecticut.

Hartford Hawks Welcome New AD

Anton Goff, who has extensive experience in the field of athletics administration, most recently as athletic director at Bowie State University in Maryland, has been named the new director of athletics at the University of Hartford.

Goff was introduced at a press conference on May 2 in the Sports Center, where he displayed his energy and enthusiasm for the University of Hartford, unveiling what is sure to be his new slogan: “Hawk Nation Domination.”

“When I look at this place, I see limitless potential,” said Goff, who will assume his new position in July. He outlined six areas of focus as the University’s athletic director—academic success, athletic success, accountability, compliance, community involvement, and character.

“I was attracted to Hartford athletics by its academic and athletic accomplishments. This university has created opportunities for students to be successful both in the classroom and on the field, and I want to build on that,” Goff said.

Goff will succeed Pat Meiser, current director of athletics, who is retiring after 21 years at the University. Both Goff and University of Hartford President Walter Harrison paid tribute to Meiser and the program she has built over the past two decades.

“Over the past 21 years, Pat Meiser has built a superb foundation for our athletics department. Now I look forward to working with Anton, and I’m very excited to see how he will lead us to new levels of success and excellence,” Harrison said.

Goff has been athletic director at Bowie State since 2010. Under his leadership Bowie State athletic programs increased student-athletes’ academic success rate (Bowie’s student-athlete graduation rate is now higher than that of its overall student population); enhanced their existing facilities; exceeded fundraising targets; and captured Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association championship titles in men’s basketball (2013) and women’s bowling (2013).

Prior to his Bowie State appointment, Goff served as the associate athletic director and the sport supervisor for six varsity sports at the University of Maryland–College Park. Before that he was associate director of support services for Michigan State University’s football team.

Goff earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in the administration of justice from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond in 1991 and 1993, respectively. He is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated, as well as multiple honor societies.

Goff and his wife, Wendy, have two daughters, Alexa, 9, and Gianna, 5.

Meiser to Retire

Meiser arrived at the University of Hartford in 1993 as only the 13th female athletics director at the NCAA Division I level and the third AD at the University of Hartford in the Division I era. The hallmark of her tenure at UHart has been to foster a culture of collegiate athletics based on excellence, integrity, and a balanced student-athlete experience. Her leadership has been marked by a commitment to NCAA rules compliance, fiscal conservatism, increased visibility through corporate partnership, community engagement, and athletic success.

“Pat Meiser is an icon in her field, recognized here at the University, within our conference, within our state, and across the country for what she has done for student-athletes, coaches, and athletics professionals,” said UHart President Walter Harrison. “She has been widely and publicly recognized as a pioneer of Title IX and opportunities for women, but fundamentally, she has always been about opportunities for everyone. She has left her impact here at the University and everywhere she has been.”
Headed for California

Radar guns were popping on many a spring afternoon on campus—and they weren’t aimed at cars testing the speed limit. They were focused instead on the University of Hartford’s Fiondella Field, and most specifically on junior pitcher Sean Newcomb, the Hawks’ latest entry into the world of professional sports.

On June 5, Newcomb was selected in the first round of the Major League Baseball (MLB) draft, the 15th pick overall, by the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim. He is the first UHart player ever selected in the opening round. Four-time Major League All-Star Jeff Bagwell, a Hawk from 1987 to 1989, was selected in the fourth round by the Boston Red Sox in the 1989 MLB draft.

Newcomb’s game has blossomed at UHart. The 6-foot-5 left-hander’s fastball has rocketed to 96 miles per hour, complemented by an increasing arsenal of off-speed pitches. About 25 scouts were on hand each time Newcomb took the mound.

In 13 starts during the regular season, Newcomb was 7-2 with a 1.36 earned-run average—13th best in the nation, and by more than a run, in America East. He allowed opponents only 5.11 hits per nine innings, fourth best in America. His 92 strikeouts, better than one per inning pitched, ranked 27th nationally.

As a freshman, Newcomb hurled a no-hitter in a seven-inning game, the first by a Hawk in almost three decades. This past April, he became the only player in Hawks’ baseball history to strike out 20 batters.

A Baseball America Preseason All-American, Newcomb was recognized in the magazine’s April 14 edition for holding the longest streak in 2014 without allowing an earned run, going 40 innings to start the season before yielding his first earned run to Maine.

Newcomb also recorded his 200th career strikeout against Albany in April, becoming the only player in Hawks’ baseball history to strike out 200 batters.

Alyssa Englert ’14 (women’s basketball) is one of only five Division I women players named to this year’s Allstate Women’s Basketball Coaches Association Good Works Team. She was recognized for her countless hours of community service on campus and throughout our community. Englert was key in planning and executing the 2012 Walk for Weaver that raised more than $45,000 for her former Hawk teammate Amanda Weaver to help in Weaver’s battle with cancer. Englert also has volunteered with Tabor House, a shelter for homeless men living with HIV/AIDS; Boys & Girls Clubs; and the YMCA, as well as participating in the Hartford Breast Cancer Walk. She also mentors a child at the University of Hartford Magnet School. Englert accepted her award during the Final Four in Nashville, Tenn., a busy, four-day trip she calls “the experience of a lifetime.”

Damion Lowe ’15 (men’s soccer) became the first Hawk in 17 years to be drafted by a Major League Soccer (MSL) team, when the Seattle Sounders made him the eighth-overall pick in last January’s draft. As a tri-captain last fall, Lowe was named Second Team All-Northeast Region and First Team All-America East while leading the defense to a 0.91 goals-against average, a new school record dating back to the program’s first year in Division I in 1984. Hartford posted the most wins since 1996 last season, earning its second America East Championship title game appearance in three years. “Damion goes to one of the best organizations in the MLS and gets to play in a great soccer environment,” Hawks head coach Tom Poitras says. “Damion has his best soccer still ahead of him. He will be a tremendous representative of our soccer program and the University of Hartford.”

Evan Russell ’16

After posting one of the most impressive single seasons in program history, Evan Russell ’16 of the University of Hartford’s Men’s Golf team continues to receive accolades. At the end of the 2014 spring season, he was named to the Division I PING Northeast All-Region Team for the second-straight year.

Russell competed in the 2014 NCAA Men’s Golf Championship regional in Raleigh, N.C., May 15–17. One of only five individuals selected to compete, Russell finished tied for 29th place among the 75 golfers in the field. He is the first UHart men’s golfer to play in the NCAA regionals since 2007, when the Hawks won the America East Championship and qualified as a team.

Russell, who hails from Essex, Vt., posted a 70.39 strokes-per-round average through 31 rounds this season. That number stands as the best single-season average in program history. Russell was tabbed the 2014 America Sky Men’s Golf Conference Player of the Year and was named to the America Sky All-Conference First Team.

Stephanie Santos ’15 (women’s soccer) represented Portugal as a member of the national team as it competed in the 21st Algarve Cup, an invitational women’s soccer tournament held annually in Portugal. Santos was one of only two college players invited to play on the team. In her first season with the Hawks in 2013 after transferring from Southern Connecticut State University, Santos earned America East co-Midfielder of the Year accolades. She was named to the New England Women’s Intercollegiate Soccer Association All-New England First Team and earned America East All-Conference First Team honors. She led the Hawks and the America East with seven assists during the regular season, while adding a goal and an assist in the conference tournament.