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Friday, March 20, 2009

BULLDOGS RETURN HOME FOR PAIR OF WEEKEND GAMES AGAINST THE UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT MERCY AND PENN

[Live Stats](#)

SMITHFIELD, R.I. - After a tough Spring Break trip that saw the Bryant University men's lacrosse team face a pair of ranked teams en route to a 1-2 record, the Bulldogs return home to play in front of a friendly home crowd for the first time since late February. The Bulldogs will bookend the weekend with home games, first hosting first-year program University of Detroit Mercy on Friday at 7 p.m. before facing off against Ivy League opponent Penn on Sunday afternoon in 1 p.m. bout at the Bryant Turf Complex.

The Bulldogs (4-4) open the weekend set on Friday evening when they match up with a brand-new Detroit program still in search of its first-ever program win.

But just like the Bulldogs, the Titans (0-5) have given their team an ambitious schedule in their inaugural campaign, facing off against the likes of Ohio State University, Bellarmine and No. 3 North Carolina.

"Detroit is doing a great job there," said Bryant head coach Mike Pressler. "One of the things in scheduling is you don't always do what's best for you and your program, but sometimes you do what's good for the game."

"Detroit creating their program, Bryant going Division I, these are just great things for lacrosse," he continued. "So it just made sense and I can't thank coach Matt Holtz enough for coming to Rhode Island and playing the Bulldogs this weekend."

Despite the grueling slate, the Titans are getting goals from nine different scorers over the last five games, led by Matt Gregson (6g, 4a). Still, they have yet to find success in the form of a victory and come to Smithfield, R.I. with something to prove.

Pat O'Shea helps Gregson carry the scoring load, chipping in five tallies and four helpers of his own, while Kevin Demorest (3g, 3a), Vince Wigdahl (4g, 1a) and Michael Schumacher (3g, 2a) have recorded six, five and five points apiece, respectively.

Detroit has not done well against the riding game early in the 2009 season and are successful just 63.6 percent of the time. Bryant has held opponents to a 78.8 percent success rate coming out of the backfield while completing 76.2 percent of its own clear attempts.

"Clearing is certainly something we've addressed in practice and must improve on starting tonight," said Pressler, whose team has struggled to clear as of late. "I think there's a confidence issue as well as a decision-making issue and we just haven't handled that as consistently as we should."

The Titans average just six goals per game coming into Friday's game, allowing opponents to score 18 per outing. Goalie Vince Diana sports a 16.55 goals against average that can be deceiving, thanks to the level of Detroit's competition in 2009.

But Pressler isn't worried about the numbers.

"We're not really concerned about the stats," he said. "It's about us getting back on track."

Danny Preston will challenge the nation's leader at the faceoff X in Bryant junior **Andrew Hennessey (Wading River, N.Y.)**. Hennessey has been integral to the Bulldogs' success so far this season, and with a .729 winning percentage, it's no wonder he's been the Bryant MVP in the first half of the season. Against ranked teams in 2009 (Virginia, Army, Loyola and Maryland), Hennessey is a combined 65-for-90 (.722) on restarts.

"Andrew has a high level of confidence but he has to understand that even though it's not a ranked opponent, he can't lose his focus," said Pressler. "That's something we have to be mature about."

"Regardless of who we play tonight, we've had a tough stretch on the road and we're starting our second half the season," said Pressler. "We've talked about the things we can do to improve and the things we want to accomplish, but you can't get to Penn until you've dealt with Detroit Mercy."

The Titans have been off for the last 13 days, having last taken the field in competitive play on March 3.

"They are certainly rested to say the least," Pressler said. "We're expecting a competitive game from the Titans Friday at 7."


The Bulldogs won't be able to enjoy that kind of luxury after Friday's bout, as Bryant has just a one-day turnaround before taking on the University of Pennsylvania Sunday afternoon at 1 p.m.

But Penn won't have time to recuperate either. The Quakers are 1-3 entering this weekend but will play back-to-back games starting with a Saturday bout at Harvard University. Following the conference matchup, Penn will travel to Smithfield in search of a road win against the Bulldogs.

"Penn is one of the best 1-3 teams that we'll see all year," Pressler said. "They have a game on Saturday against arguably the best team in the Ivy League this year in Harvard, so we both have business to take care of before we get to our game on Sunday."

The Quaker numbers can also be deceptive. Their single win came in a 9-8 topping of Drexel in the season opener, with three-straight losses to Villanova - a team receiving votes in both polls - No. 18/RV Denver and league rival Yale, 14-13 in overtime.

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Penn is averaging 8.74 goals per game entering the weekend set, allowing 11.99 per contest to the opposing offense. Craig Andrzejewski paces the Quakers with nine goals and a pair of helpers, while Corey Winkoff chips in 10 points off two tallies and a team-best eight helpers. Of Penn's 35 goals on the season, 21 have come unassisted with seven others coming with an extra man. The Quakers have been most productive in the second frame, recording 13 of their 35 tallies in the second 15 minutes.

Justin Lynch leads the squad with 24 ground balls while going 48-of-93 (.516) from the faceoff, and as a team, the Quakers have failed on just six of 57 clear attempts.

The Bulldogs will again be led by **Zack Greer (Whitby, Ont.)**, whose puts a 42-game points scored streak on the line this weekend, but enters Friday's game among the nation's leading scorers with 21 goals and 12 assists. Senior linemates **Bryan Kaufmann (Putnam Valley, N.Y.)** and **Kevin Hoagland (Glastonbury, Conn.)** each chip in 14 goals apiece dishing out eight and five, respectively.

"Our schedules this weekend are very similar, the difference being that we've done this on the road before and fortunately we're at home this time," said Pressler. "In front of the home crowd, on a nice spring weekend, with the ability to catch up after the long road trip - I can't believe we won't be very excited about both games this weekend."



Go Bryant Bulldogs!



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