

2004 CIS WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

Head Coach: Stu Julius (5th season, 45-61 league record, 5-6 in post-season)

2003-2004 Regular Season Record: 12-10 (15-16 overall record)

2003-2004 Regular Season Ranking: unranked in CIS Top 10

2003-2004 Playoff Record: 3-1

2003-2004 Playoff Ranking: OUA Silver Medalist

2002-2003 Regular Season: 14-7 (2-3 post-season)

CIS Championship Appearances: SECOND in program history, 2002-2003 (L 2 games)

CIS Titles: None

OUA Titles: None

Conference All-Stars:

Meaghan McGrath, 1st team OUA West All-Star

Sarah Zagorski, 1st team OUA West All-Star

Individual Stats Leaders (OUA regular season & playoffs):

Points: Meaghan McGrath (345), Dee Channer (268), Sarah Zagorski (205)

Points Per Game: Meaghan McGrath (13.27), Dee Channer (10.31)

Assists: Sarah Zagorski (83), Kerri Jilesen (31), Meaghan McGrath (30)

Rebounds: Dee Channer (154), Kerri Jilesen (128), Robin Roszell (125)

Rebounds Per Game: Dee Channer (5.92), Kerri Jilesen (4.92), Robin Roszell (4.81)

Steals: Meaghan McGrath (45), Sarah Zagorski (41)

Blocks: Kerri Jilesen (25), Meaghan McGrath (8), Robin Roszell (6)

GOLDEN HAWK SEASON IN REVIEW:

Laurier went to the 2003-2004 season after their first-ever appearance at the CIS Championships last year. Determined to find their way back to the national stage, the team worked hard in the off-season, and head coach Stu Julius secured three recruits to augment a veteran line. With ten of last year's Hawks returning, the team's confidence was high, and the road to the CIS Championships again seemed open.

The returning Hawks represented a powerful selection of Varsity Women's Basketball talent; Meaghan McGrath, 2002-2003's OUA Rookie of the Year, promised to be a major force, as did veteran third-year captain and All-Star Sarah Zagorski. Fourth-year veterans Dee Channer and Rebecca Williams were expected to guide the team with experience, as was third-year post player Robin Rozell. Equally crucial to the lineup, however, were not just the more senior players, but the many returning second-year Hawks who had helped carry the team to its national showing last season. Newly-minted veterans like Sarah Barnes, Kerri Jilesen, and Heather Sutherland were set to draw on the experience of last year's run, and to give strong showings. Combined with rookies Laura Taylor, Maia Skolko, and Emily Conrad, this established team lineup seemed to promise a great Golden Hawk year.

It was of no surprise to anyone when the season began with four victories for the Hawks, but after that initial victorious run, momentum seemed to become inconsistent. Two losses would interrupt a winning streak, and then attrition would take its toll on the roster, Heather Sutherland being taken out of the lineup mid-season with a leg injury and Sarah Zagorski being sidelined with a dislocated finger. Coming to the end of February, it appeared as though the Hawks' expected Golden season had eluded them; of their last four games, two were losses -- to McMaster, then Western -- and the third was an overtime loss to Western. Their record stood at 11-9-0-1, and for their final game they faced their division rivals, the Guelph Gryphons. That game turned momentum on its head -- the Hawks walked away with a 60-56 victory, and headed into the post season with optimism.

The playoff schedule did not favor the Hawks: McMaster, Western and Brock stood between the Hawks and the OUA final – all teams that had defeated the Laurier women in February. Rallying from their last win, the Hawk ladies threw themselves into the post-season fray, and in rapid succession upset these three formidable OUA teams. McMaster fell 58-50, regular-season leaders of the OUA Division West, were thrust aside after Western was defeated 70-62, and Brock, was defeated in a close-fought 62-59 game. The final two playoff games took place on the road. The Laurier women had found their ultimate form at the perfect time: they found themselves at the OUA Final, destined to face the Ottawa Gee Gees, a team they had defeated early in the season. The team played a solid first half in the championship game, up 12 points, but were unable to hold it together in the second. The four point loss is the closest the Golden Hawk Women's Basketball program has ever got to the OUA Championship banner.