

Track & Field paces stellar spring for Thunderbird athletes

Southern Utah University enjoyed an outstanding spring this year, winning three Mid-Continent Conference championships while advancing to the league tournament in every sport offered! The SUU men's and women's track & field teams dominated the outdoor championships in Cedar City in Mid-May to give the two squads a season sweep of all six track titles following the teams' first-place finishes in cross country and indoor track & field. SUU's softball squad posted a school-record 38 wins en route to its second straight regular season Mid-Con title, while baseball advanced to the championship game of the league tournament before falling just a win short of its first appearance in the College World Series. Both women's tennis and men's golf enjoyed success in the spring as well, as the tennis team led the Mid-Con much of the season before finishing third and the golf team posted a handful of impressive finishes.

n OUTDOOR TRACK & FIELD

Southern Utah's cross country and track and field programs enjoyed the most successful season to date in the 2003-04 campaign. Southern Utah became the first program in Mid-Continent Conference history to capture all six men's and women's championships in one season to record dual conference "Triple Crowns". After winning men's and women's titles at both the cross country and indoor track & field meets the stage was set for the unprecedented Mid-Con sweep as Southern Utah hosted the conference outdoor championship meet at Eccles Coliseum. The T-Birds did not disappoint in front of the hometown fans as both squads posted convincing victories to complete the Triple-Crown sweep. SUU's women notched their second-straight season-sweep and third in the last four years overall in repeating as outdoor champions, outscoring second-place Western Illinois, 270-218.5, while the men won their second outdoor title in seven years by a 282-242.5 decision over Western. **Aleisha Bezanson** was voted Female Outdoor Athlete of the Year by winning the 800-meters, 1,500-m and 5,000-m races in the meet's final day, while freshman **Ashley Morrison** was named Female Newcomer of the Year for her performances in field events. In the men's competition, **Cody Moat** continued his strong performances in Mid-Con competition by claiming event-victories in the 3,000-m steeplechase and 10,000-



Aleisha Bezanson

m, while freshman **Nate Houle** was voted Male Newcomer of the Year for his efforts in the middle distance races. Overall, T-Bird athletes won 16 conference track event titles- eight for each team- and set one Mid-Con championship record, that being in the women's 100-m hurdles as sophomore **Kelly Schoney** blistered the field with a preliminary-heat time of 13.79. Head Coach **Eric Houle** also made a clean sweep of the Mid-Con Coach of the Year honors in leading his T-Bird squads to 23 conference titles overall in 42 Mid-Con championship meets competed in the seven years as a member of the Mid-Con. SUU also sent nine athletes to the NCAA West Regional championships, at which Bezanson capped her incredible year by breaking the school record in the 1,500-m to place ninth overall in the region. In all, 16

school records were broken combined in men's and women's indoor and outdoor track competition this past season, while 136 top-10 all-time marks were established by T-Bird athletes.

n SOFTBALL

The Thunderbird softball squad dominated the Mid-Con this year, finishing with a 19-5 league mark and a 38-18 overall record. Senior pitcher/outfielder **Lacee LePrey** was named the conference's Player of the Year after leading the Mid-Con in six hitting and two pitching categories, including batting average at .387 as well as pitching wins with an SUU-record 23. In addition to the pitching wins, LePrey set SUU records for home runs (nine), hits (65), total bases (119) and slugging percentage at .690. Head Coach **Laurel Simmons** was named the conference's Coach of the Year for the third time in her six seasons at the helm of the T-Birds. SUU saw six players named to the all-Mid-Con team, with senior third baseman **Anna Leeman**, junior centerfielder **Kimberly Tillery**, sophomore first baseman **Jentry Johnson** and freshman designated player **Kristen Carmicheal** all named to the first team, while sophomore second baseman **Ashley Howerton** was named to the second team.

n BASEBALL

SUU's baseball team enjoyed another solid campaign in 2004, advancing to its fifth-straight Mid-Continent Conference baseball tournament, earning a spot in the championship game for the fifth-consecutive time. SUU was the only Mid-Con team to claim victory over nationally-ranked Oral Roberts, snapping the Golden Eagles' 39-game Mid-Con winning streak with a 10-7 victory at Thunderbird Park. SUU had eight players voted to all-Mid-Con teams, including two first team selections in junior SS **Jason Ruiz** and junior OF **Amos Burgess**. Ruiz won the conference batting title in 2004 by hitting .398 with 14 doubles, one home run, 25 RBI, 51 runs scored and 12 stolen bases, while Burgess batted .372 with 11 home runs and 50 RBI to go along with 15 steals, 14 doubles and 45 runs scored. Of the



six players named to the second team, two were pitchers: freshman RHP **Ryan Zimmerman** and junior RHP **Justin Abbott**. Offensively, juniors **Josh Bolingbroke**, **Kory Drew**, **Darren Duckworth** and **Mike**

Martin earned second-team recognition. **Abbott**, **Burgess**, **Zimmerman** and senior **Shelby Guest** also garnered Mid-Con all-Tournament honors in helping lead the Thunderbirds to the conference title game.



n WOMEN'S TENNIS

SUU's tennis team had one of its most successful seasons since the program was reinstated in 1994. This year's squad went 5-0 to begin league play and was tied atop the Mid-Con standings before suffering its first league loss, to eventual league champion Valparaiso, then finished the season with a 6-2 league mark heading into the Mid-Con tournament. SUU's only other regular-season Mid-Con defeat came at the hands of IUPUI. SUU's **Kim Beynon** was named the league's player of the week twice during the season and earned a spot on the all-conference squad after posting an 11-6 overall record, including a 5-2 mark in Mid-Con play. **Mandi Walker** (5-1), **Liseth Hoyos** (5-3), **Crystal Holt** (6-2) and **Casie Brooks** (4-3) all posted winning league records as well, while **Cristina Garcia** fell just short at first singles, finishing 3-5 in league play.

n MEN'S GOLF

The Southern Utah golf team had an up-and-down spring season, with top-10 finishes at every tournament, including a seventh-place finish at BYU's prestigious Cougar Classic, but was a disappointing seventh at the Mid-Con championship. The T-Birds were also eighth at UC Riverside's Braveheart Classic, sixth at Drake's Diablo Grande Invitational, ninth at Grand Canyon's Thunderbird Invitational. Junior **Kenny Eballo** led the T-Birds with a 74.8 stroke average (the third-lowest in the school's history) and was named the Mid-Con's player of the week twice, while teammate and fellow junior **Zach Johnson** also received the weekly honor twice. Eballo had three top-10 finishes while Johnson had two and senior **Tad Hunt** had another this past season. 