



Are you ready for some
football?

Birmingham-Southern enters new era of intercollegiate athletics; football team retakes field after 68 years

BY PAT COLE & BILL WAGNON



Photo by Geoff Knight.



It's a story that's been told. And told again. And again and again. It's been played out for the past 15 months in the local and national media.

Legendary sports columnist Frank Deford. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. *The Christian Science Monitor*. College Sports TV. *The Birmingham News*. *USA Today*. *Inside Higher Education*. And others.

It's been called "extraordinary." "Bold." "Unusual." "An important statement for higher education." After all, no college or university had been so "bold" since 1988. And only three have in the past quarter of a century.

Birmingham-Southern had moved its intercollegiate athletics program from NCAA Division I to non-scholarship NCAA Division III, a transition that would better align the nationally recognized liberal arts institution with colleges and universities of similar mission, size, and financial resources.

THE D-III JOURNEY BEGINS

“One institution, Alabama’s Birmingham-Southern, has had to reject the myriad lures of Division I and ‘move down’ to Division III. ... Though athletic types in Birmingham may fret about the school’s lower national profile, they should not fret about quality of competition. Division III is a bastion of old-school, amateur competition ... ”

—A.G. Gancarski, *The Greentree Gazette*, November 2006.

“In 2006, Birmingham-Southern College, a small private school in Birmingham, Alabama, made what appeared to be a surprising decision. While the college did not have a football team, it did compete quite successfully in other Division I sports. ... The board of trustees and board of the college voted to drop the school from Division I to Division III ... Birmingham-Southern came to the realization about college athletics that Washington & Jefferson College has been practicing since its first football team took the field in 1983—that when athletics and scholarship are on an even playing field, both aspects of the college experience benefit. ... ”

—*Washington & Jefferson College Magazine*, Spring 2007.



The 2007 Birmingham-Southern Football Team.

" ... And oh yes, this too. With the money saved from scholarships, a football team has been added at Birmingham-Southern, as well as four other new sports, male and female. Almost twice as many students will actually play intercollegiate sports than did before. Giving up athletic scholarships at Birmingham-Southern greatly improved, yes, athletics at Birmingham-Southern."

—Frank Deford, National Public Radio and CNN/SI.com, January 10, 2007.

" ... It is possible for a college to maintain a healthy environment for student-athletes while still keeping support of alumni, students, faculty, and the Evansville community. Consider Birmingham-Southern. With an enrollment of 1,300 and a Methodist affiliation, this small college in Alabama is similar to UE [University of Evansville] except for one detail: early last month, it dropped from Division I to Division III athletics. Did this change decrease retention? Deter alumni giving? Just the opposite. The freshman class has increased by nearly 50 percent, and alumni contributions are up."

—*The University of Evansville Crescent* online, February 16, 2007.

Historic Munger Bowl, site of BSC football until 1939.

Thus the NCAA Division III journey for Birmingham-Southern begins. The time for talk is over. With much fanfare, Birmingham-Southern has begun its NCAA Division III intercollegiate athletics era.



A HISTORY OF ATHLETICS SUCCESS



BSC supporters welcome the 2001 National Championship Baseball Panthers home.

The college's long athletics history includes 46 years as a member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, where the men's basketball team captured national championships in 1990 and 1995, and the baseball team in 2001.

In May 1999, the college announced that it had applied for membership in scholarship granting NCAA Division I, the highest level of intercollegiate athletics competition. To meet NCAA requirements, sports were added including women's basketball, softball, and rifle, and men's and women's golf. Birmingham-Southern joined the Big South Conference, and won eight Big South Conference titles and competed in five NCAA Division I tournaments.

In May 2006, the Birmingham-Southern Board of Trustees voted to transition the college's intercollegiate athletics program from NCAA Division I to non-scholarship Division III. Trustees cited both philosophical and financial reasons for the transition.

"One of the things we considered in the decision was which athletics division is indeed the right fit for an institution of our size, of our academic mission and quality, and of our financial resources," then BSC Board of Trustees Chair James T. Stephens said at the time. "Division III is compatible with the college's mission and profile."

"Birmingham-Southern just simply matches the profile of a Division III school," says BSC President Dr. David Pollick today.

"We look like them—in terms of our size and academic quality. We have 1,300 students. We have a Phi Beta Kappa chapter, just like 11 of the 12 schools in our new athletics conference. What we did was very important in higher education in this country, and very important to our college."

Shortly after the announcement, the college accepted an invitation to join the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference (highlighted elsewhere in this feature), and sports were added, including football, men's and women's lacrosse, and men's and women's indoor and outdoor track and field.

Birmingham-Southern already is seeing the benefits of the move to Division III in terms of its plan to grow enrollment to about 1,800



Varsity Sports

Birmingham-Southern provides its students with the opportunity to participate in 21 NCAA Division III varsity sports. The college is a member of the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference.

Men's Sports

Baseball
Basketball
Cross Country
Football
Golf
Indoor and Outdoor Track and Field
Lacrosse
Soccer
Tennis

Women's Sports

Basketball
Cross Country
Golf
Indoor and Outdoor Track and Field
Lacrosse
Rifle
Soccer
Softball
Tennis
Volleyball

students over the next few years.

"Adding sports at the non-scholarship level allows many more students to play varsity sports at Birmingham-Southern than before, and also is one small part of our enrollment strategy that will allow us to grow in size similar to other national liberal arts colleges in the country," says Pollick.

"Division III sports are so attractive to young men and women in our state and across the country who love to compete and want to balance that with a top-notch educational experience."

Birmingham-Southern Director of Athletics Joe Dean Jr. estimates that about 344 students will play varsity sports at Birmingham-Southern this academic year, about 233 men and 111 women. That's up from about 200 scholarship athletes when the college was fully operating as an NCAA Division I program.

Some 506 new students were

expected to start classes at BSC in August, including a record 452 freshmen. Of the new students, about 120 will play varsity sports at Birmingham-Southern.

"The move to NCAA Division III has worked very well for us, and our coaches and student-athletes are excited about the future," says Dean. "This is my 15th year on the Hilltop and I can't remember anything that has created more excitement on campus and in the community than our new football program. With new programs beginning this year and next in lacrosse and track and field, we will have 21 sports teams and 350 student-athletes on our campus. Their energy and enthusiasm is inspiring, and certainly we want to give them every opportunity to be successful both in the classroom and on the fields and courts. Our rich tradition of excellence will continue as we move forward."

D-III FACTS & FIGURES

(from www.ncaa.org)

Total Members

443 (80% private, 20% public)

Average Institutional Enrollment

2,057 (BSC: 1,319)

Average Number of Sports:

Men: 7.8

Women: 8.6

BSC: 10 Men; 11 Women

NCAA-Sponsored Championships Opportunities

Men: 13 sports

Women: 14 sports

National Collegiate: 9 sports

Scholar-Athletes

Men: 86,116 (58%)

Women: 62,632 (42%)

Total: 148,748 (100%)

Average Number of Participants per Institution

Men: 202.0

Women: 146.1

BSC: 344 (233 men; 111 women)





Briana Williams, a sophomore pre-pharmacy major from Forestdale, is ready for some football!

JUST WHAT IS DIVISION III ?

(from www.ncaa.org)

The National Collegiate Athletic Association, or NCAA, is a voluntary organization through which the nation’s colleges and universities govern their athletics programs and is broken up into three distinct divisions.

Division III athletics features student-athletes who receive no financial aid related to their athletic ability, and athletics departments are staffed and funded like any other department in the university. Division III athletics departments place special importance on the impact of athletics on the participants rather than on the spectators. The student-athlete’s experience is of paramount concern. Division III athletics encourages participation by maximizing the number and variety of athletics opportunities available to students, placing primary emphasis on regional in-season and conference competition.

ARE YOU REA

“Are you ready for some football?” shouts Athletics Director Dean at yet another gathering of Birmingham-Southern alumni and supporters. Yes, football is back on the Hilltop.

Dean is not the only one enthusiastic as the college fields its first football team in 68 years.

“BSC Football: Undefeated since 1939” proclaim the T-shirts that have been selling briskly at the BSC Bookstore for over a year, and which are located near the BSC logo tailgate tent also for sale. Billboards on the interstates leading into the city proclaim that “Football is Back at Birmingham-Southern.” Students have been preparing tailgate plans for months, and checking into travel arrangements to select out of town games. The Athletics Department and the Alumni Association will entertain alumni before games with barbecue and entertainment.

Phase one of the new BSC Football Complex is nearing completion on the northwest side of campus below the BSC Softball Park and adjacent to Interstate 59/20. Phase 1 includes a training room, locker room, and weight room. Turf on the practice field has been laid and the synthetic playing surface on the competition field will be in place before October. A state-of-the-art eight-lane track will encircle the field by late fall.

For the 2007 season, the new team will play home games at Legion Field, Regions Park in Hoover, and Homewood High School.

Two BSC students were so enthusiastic about the resurgence of football at BSC that they spent the spring semester writing a history of Birmingham-Southern football for course credit (highlighted elsewhere in this feature).



2007 Football Schedule

(All times central)

Sept. 6 (Thursday)	Mississippi College, junior varsity	Legion Field	6 p.m.
Sept. 15	Rhodes College	Regions Park	Noon
Sept. 23 (Sunday)	at Maryville College, junior varsity	LaGrange, Ga.	1:30 p.m.
Sept. 29	at Trinity University	San Antonio, Texas	1:30 p.m.
Oct. 6	DePauw University (Homecoming)	Regions Park	1:30 p.m.
Oct. 13	at Austin College	Sherman, Texas	1 p.m.
Oct. 20	Centre College	Homewood Field	Noon
Oct. 27	Colorado College	Regions Park	Noon
Nov. 3	at Sewanee	Sewanee, Tenn.	1:30 p.m.
Nov. 10	at Millsaps College	Jackson, Miss.	1 p.m.

DY FOR SOME FOOTBALL?

Birmingham-Southern's parent institutions—Southern University and Birmingham College—each fielded football teams. According to the *2007 BSC Football Media Guide*, Birmingham College played varsity football from 1904 to 1917, with a 19-32-4 record (with no records available for 1905). Southern University fielded varsity football teams from 1909-11 and 1915-16, posting an overall 3-16-11 record.

Following the consolidation of the two institutions in 1918, Birmingham-Southern compiled a 87-80-16 record between 1918-39, winning Dixie Conference championships in 1932, 1934, and 1937. A perfect 9-0 season in 1934 included a road victory over Auburn.

Home games were played in Munger Bowl on the BSC campus. The Panthers' big rival game in those days with Howard College (now Samford) was played on Thanksgiving at Rickwood Field and later Legion Field. Known then as the Magic City Classic, it was without a doubt the state's biggest football game each fall. In fact, it was BSC vs. Howard that dedicated the new Legion Field in 1927.

By the time the 1939 season kicked off, however, the BSC players and coaches knew it would be their last on the Hilltop. In November of that year, the Panthers upset the heavily favored Howard Bulldogs 9-6 in what would be the last Birmingham-Southern football game for 68 years. Football was scrapped because of its costs and its influence.

As 1958 BSC alumnus and journalist Don Brown would write in his 2005 *Forward, Ever: Birmingham-Southern College at its Sesquicentennial*, "A great tradition ran headlong into a brick wall of

'unreasonable' costs and overemphasis in 1939. At President Raymond Paty's request, the trustees said play that season, then no more. A supportive *Hilltop* alumni magazine declared, '... football [cannot] occupy a normal place in the life of a student interested in the fundamental curriculum ... if a college is to be regarded as primarily a place of higher education [athletics should] be a normal incident in every student's life.' Upon such a predicate, the college shifted emphasis to intramural sports. A few attempts to revive football went nowhere. ... "

Nowhere, that is, until now. Football is back at Birmingham-Southern College.

Former University of Alabama and Atlanta Falcons star receiver Joey Jones was introduced as the college's fifth head football coach on June 19, 2006, and was charged with reviving the long dormant program. He left a highly successful high school coaching career (Mountain Brook and Dora) to build a Division III program at Birmingham-Southern. After assembling a coaching staff, he hit the recruiting trail. On Aug. 12, 2007, he welcomed 126 players to the Legion Field turf (where the Panthers practiced during August before moving to the new on-campus facilities in September) for preseason workouts in preparation of the first BSC football game in nearly seven decades—Sept. 6 against Mississippi College at Legion Field.

Coach Jones recently discussed the revived BSC football program and the 2007 season.

BSC GRIDIRON CLUB

New Gridiron Club to support BSC football program

Birmingham-Southern alumni, fans, and friends who would like to support BSC football can join the new Gridiron Club. Become one of the men and women who are committed to the continued growth of BSC and the college's football program.

Head Coach Joey Jones and his staff recruited more than 120 football players to Birmingham-Southern to begin NCAA Division III play in September 2007.

Coach Jones' success as an All-SEC player at the University of Alabama under Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant and his 125 career wins at Dora and Mountain Brook high schools bring an added excitement to the Hilltop, as football returns for the first time since 1939.

Fans can join at the following levels:

Touchdown member: \$100

Includes two season football tickets for all BSC home games, a football media guide, and newsletters.

Corporate member: \$500

Includes 12 season tickets for all BSC home games, a football media guide, newsletters, and recognition in the "game day" program at home games.

Season tickets only: \$50 per season ticket

Season tickets are \$50 each for five home games and may be purchased in any amount. Season ticket holders will receive one football media guide and newsletters.

Championship member: gift in any amount

Designed for BSC football donors who wish to support Coach Jones and the BSC football program with a gift. Members will not receive season tickets unless specifically requested, but will receive the football media guide and newsletters.

Q&A WITH HEAD FOOTBALL COACH JOEY JONES

Interview by Fred Sington, assistant athletics director for media relations

Q. NCAA Division III football rules do not allow teams to wear full pads. What was the main focus of spring practice?

A. "Our focus was purely about teaching the kids fundamentals and introducing our offensive and defensive packages. Obviously, we didn't get too deep into it from the fundamental standpoint because we didn't have pads on. We can't teach blocking and tackling like you would want to. But for scheme purposes, we got a lot in. We probably got about 70 percent of what we would do on each side of the ball over the course of the spring. We felt like it was definitely useful."

Q. How many student-athletes participated in spring and what was your overall assessment of spring practice?

A. "We had 29 kids who we started off with and we ended up with 27. I think the kids had great attitudes and work ethic. I challenged them to be the nucleus so that when we got back in summer they could teach the newcomers about what we want in practice. I think it went very well. Obviously, we were glad to have a full slate of players this summer. It was hard to practice with 29 kids, but I was excited about how they practiced."

Q. How many student-athletes arrived on campus for preseason camp and what transfers or newcomers do you expect to be significant contributors this season?

A. "We had 126 players come in on the opening weekend. We feel real good about the numbers and the type of kids we brought in. Offensively, Anthony Mostella (transfer from Army), who was here



Jones

this spring from Oneonta, and Walter Arrington (freshman from Bessemer Academy), who will be another running back/receiver, have potential to be great players for us. Tony Myers, a transfer from The Citadel, has a chance to be a really good receiver.

"I feel really good about our battle at quarterback. We have five

quarterbacks who we feel really good about. I don't know how we are going to end up there, but it is going to be a great battle. We have Drew Jackson, a transfer from Tennessee-Martin; Joe Thigpen, a signee out of Crestview, Fla.; Chandler Bares, a transfer from Rhodes College; David Howe from Montgomery Bell Academy in Nashville; and Jake Turing out of Sand Creek, Ga.

"I think we have three or four guys who we feel like are going to be really good players for us on the offensive line. But we have got to find some guys who are going to fill in the rest and also back up. We need to find at least eight guys who can play.

"Defensively, I am real impressed with the secondary guys we have. I think we are going to have depth in the secondary, which really helps in that a lot of teams are pass happy. So now we can run a lot of nickel coverage with five defensive backs in the game. I think we will have enough depth to do that. Jerron Mitchell out of Sparkman High School and Chase Brown out of Muscle Shoals are a couple of standouts who we feel good about in the secondary. We have a lot of numbers linebacker and defensive line-wise. Defensive line-wise, we are a little thin. I think we have more defensive end types than we

do interior guys. So we have to step up on the inside."

Q. Talk about your offensive coaching staff and what type of offense BSC will run in 2007.

A. "Joel Williams is our offensive coordinator. We worked together at Mountain Brook for three years. I feel good about his plan. I feel real good about him as a coordinator. He is one of the best in the business. He will coach the quarterbacks, and I'll coach the receivers. Hindley Brigham will be our running backs coach. He is doing a good job of learning our system and has been very eager to learn. Brad McAbee, our offensive line coach, is no doubt a very good offensive line coach. He is the kind of guy who gets the players playing hard and does a good job at getting the kids understanding things. He keeps things simple enough so they can progress.

"Offensively, we are going to four-wides and very multiple. We will also attach tight ends and get under center some. We are going to be very multiple in what we do, but our basis will be out of four-wide."

Q. Talk about your defensive staff and the type of defense BSC will employ this season.

A. "Coach Eddie Garfinkle has done a great job putting our defensive package together. He is a very fundamentally sound coach. I was very impressed with him in that area. Kelvis White, our defensive line coach, is going to be an extremely good defensive line coach.



Offensive Line Coach Brad McAbee works with his linemen at Legion Field during preseason practice.

He is the kind of guy the kids love, and he teaches great technique. In the secondary, Andrew Pace, who played for me at Mountain Brook and played at Vanderbilt, is very knowledgeable. He was one of those guys who was a coach on the field at Vanderbilt. He understands what is going on up front as well as in the secondary. We are excited about him. Dyer Carlisle, who coached at Mississippi State and Southern Miss, is going to coach the secondary with Andrew. We feel good about having some gray hairs on the wisdom side on defense."

Q. BSC will be playing in the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference. What are your thoughts about the overall level of football in the conference and who are top tier teams?

A. "I think when you talk Division III in general, it's going to surprise a lot of people in the type of talent that you are going to see on the field. Fifteen years ago, Division III was probably what I would call a weak league. I think Division III is probably getting the old Division II-type talent and Division II is getting Division I-AA-type talent. Things are kind of trickling down. When you watch the films of these guys, Division III is a lot better football

than anybody would ever imagine. "As far as our league goes, Trinity and Millsaps are obviously two powerhouses. They have done a great job traditionally and they have great coaching staffs and players. They are going to be the two that everybody is kind of gunning for at this point. I think it is a very good league and a good fit for Birmingham-Southern's mission. There are going to be some great rivalries with Sewanee, Rhodes, and Millsaps that are very near us."

Q. The BSC Football Complex is expected to be completed by spring 2008. Talk about the overall facility and how you think it will rank among the nation's top Division III programs and its advantages in recruiting.

A. "The facilities that we will have will be as nice as we could present to a high school student who is looking to play football at a Division III school. They have not held back on the type quality that they said they were going to do. We are going to have a sprint turf field, a nice stadium, coach's offices, and meeting rooms. The weight room is 3,600 square feet and the locker room will have over 120 lockers. We feel good about our facilities."

DIVISION III PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

(from www.ncaa.org)

Colleges and universities in Division III place highest priority on the overall quality of the educational experience and on the successful completion of all students' academic programs. They seek to establish and maintain an environment in which a student-athlete's athletics activities are conducted as an integral part of the student-athlete's educational experience, and in which coaches play a significant role as educators. They also seek to establish and maintain an environment that values cultural diversity and gender equity among their student-athletes and athletics staff.

To achieve this end, Division III institutions:

- Place special importance on the impact of athletics on the participants rather than on the spectators and place greater emphasis on the internal constituency (students, alumni, institutional personnel) than on the general public and its entertainment needs;
- Award no athletically related financial aid to any student;
- Encourage the development of sportsmanship and positive societal attitudes in all constituents, including student-athletes, coaches, administrative personnel and spectators;
- Encourage participation by maximizing the number and variety of athletics opportunities for their students;
- Assure that the actions of coaches and administrators exhibit fairness, openness and honesty in their relationships with student-athletes;
- Assure that athletics participants are not treated differently from other members of the student body;
- Assure that athletics programs support the institution's educational mission by financing, staffing and controlling the programs through the same general procedures as other departments of the institution. Further, the administration of an institution's athletics program (e.g., hiring, compensation, professional development, certification of coaches) should be integrated into the campus culture and educational mission;
- Assure that athletics recruitment complies with established institutional policies and procedures applicable to the admissions process;
- Assure that academic performance of student-athletes is, at a minimum, consistent with that of the general student body;
- Assure that admission policies for student-athletes comply with policies and procedures applicable to the general student body;
- Provide equitable athletics opportunities for males and females and give equal emphasis to men's and women's sports;
- Support ethnic and gender diversity for all constituents;
- Give primary emphasis to regional in-season competition and conference championships; and
- Support student-athletes in their efforts to reach high levels of athletics performance, which may include opportunities for participation in national championships, by providing all teams with adequate facilities, competent coaching and appropriate competitive opportunities.

STUDENTS TACKLE FIRST BOOK ON HISTORY OF BSC FOOTBALL

Being in the right place at the right time gave two Birmingham-Southern students a rare opportunity to take on an original class project of historic significance.

History majors Ben Lewellyn and Peter Starr, under the direction of two BSC professors, penned a book this year entitled *Panthers on the Gridiron: Football at Birmingham-Southern*. The 28-page book chronicles the history of the football program at Birmingham-Southern—from its inception at the college's parent institutions (Southern University in Greensboro, Ala., and Birmingham College)—to its last season on the Hilltop, which was in 1939.

"Dr. Mark Lester [professor of history] approached me about the writing project at a meeting on campus last fall and asked if Peter and I would be interested in pursuing it," says Lewellyn, a senior from Hoover. "The three of us then talked it over with Dr. Guy Hubbs [associate professor of library science and archivist], and Peter and I agreed to take on the project as a contracted class under the two professors. We worked on the book during the entire spring 2007 term."

Having done some additional fine-tuning to their writing and research over the summer, Lewellyn and Starr anticipate the book being published and distributed during the early part of the BSC football season. The students will not benefit monetarily, but will receive a 300-level history credit toward their major.

"We wrote *Panthers on the Gridiron* to familiarize BSC football fans and current students with the program's past," explains Lewellyn. "The book highlights special players and seasons and offers some drama to accompany the newly re-established football team's return this year."

"We used mostly primary sources for our research including campus and city newspapers and Birmingham-Southern yearbooks. This meant spending a great deal of time in the Birmingham Public Library microfilm room and even more time in the BSC archives. We also talked to two players from the 1939 team, Gus Noojin and Ben Royal."

The students believe they were especially suited to team up for the project. Both are members of Theta Chi fraternity and share a close friendship as classmates and as former roommates. "Our talents and personalities were well-matched from the start," says Starr, who is a junior from Atlanta and this year's Student Government Association president. "We've often proofread each other's papers and have a familiarity with one another's writing styles—strengths and weaknesses."

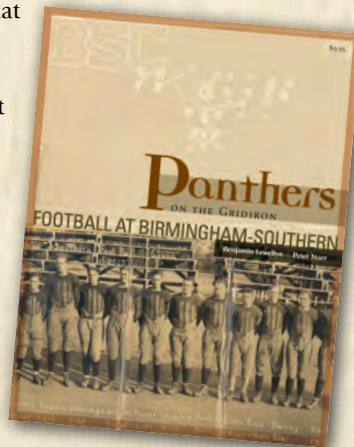
"We both feel grateful that Drs. Hubbs and Lester offered us this opportunity. They spent several long days revising the text with Ben and me, even after the spring term had ended."

For both Lewellyn and Starr, completing the book-writing project has created a great sense of accomplishment and euphoria.

"The most intriguing part of my research was finding out that BSC had a perfect, undefeated, and untied football team in 1934," notes Lewellyn. "We were one of nine teams (including the University of Alabama) that accomplished that feat in the nation that year."

"The most valuable knowledge I gained doesn't have to do with the football program, but about the continued progress of Birmingham-Southern as an institution," says Starr. "Learning the history of the program has led me to appreciate BSC's present quality even more and to be grateful for the men and women who have worked to get it there."

Panthers on the Gridiron: Football at Birmingham-Southern can be purchased from the BSC Bookstore this fall at a cost of \$9.95. Also, look for the book to be sold at Panther football games.



THE ORIGIN OF THE PANTHER

(Excerpted from *Panthers on the Gridiron: Football at Birmingham-Southern* by Ben Lewellyn and Peter Starr.)

For years our athletic teams were simply known by their colors. Southern University was just the purple and white; Birmingham College fans cheered on the "Old Gold and Black."

Birmingham College had been playing football for twelve years before earning the name of the Panthers. The occasion was the 1916 Spring Hill game in Mobile. In a game that *The Birmingham News* would later call the best offensive work of the season, the BC team surprised everyone on game day by shutting out Spring Hill and scoring a whopping thirty-three points. During the one-sided affair, an anonymous spectator likened the Birmingham team to a pack of panthers ripping through Spring Hill's players like hungry beasts. In the next week's edition of the *Birmingham College Reporter*, a sports journalist put it this way:

An anonymous scribe, whose habitat is in the dense jungles of Mobile, becoming enthused with to the extent of entire forgetfulness of the sphere inhabited by mortals, mounted to the ethereal skies ... finally fell with a resounding thud to common English and rebounded to Mount Simile ... and in the height of his dementia likened the members of Birmingham's gridiron squadron to panthers, wild and carnivorous quadrupeds camping in Africa, Asia and Ringling Brother's circus.

The account continues with a description of the way the Gold and Black "ran wild" last week and "ate ravenously of the flesh offered in appeasement by the youths of Spring Hill." The article ends with a charge to "Hail the Panthers!" The name stuck—despite the ridiculously inflated diction.

PANTHER CHEERLEADING SQUAD RE-EMERGES WITH FOOTBALL PROGRAM



After being dormant for five years, Birmingham-Southern's cheerleading program is back and its new squad ready to add some high-decibel excitement to BSC football this fall. The squad also will support the college's men's and women's basketball teams and perform at special events.

The last time the Panther cheerleaders added volume to BSC games was during the 2001-02 basketball season. "The cheerleading program was stopped before due to a lack of interest," says Kyndall Waters, assistant athletics director at BSC and coordinator of the cheerleading program. "The addition of football is what really got it going again."

Presently, the college's cheerleading squad is made up of a coed combination of six women and two men, along with Rowdy the Panther. Tryouts will continue this fall to add additional students to the squad.

Ashley Byrom, a 2001 graduate of the University of Alabama, was named the new cheerleaders coach for Birmingham-Southern last spring. This summer, she and the squad attended the three-day Universal Cheer and Dance Association camp at the University of Alabama to learn the latest in cheers, chants, and fight-song routines. They returned with second-place and Most Improved trophies in the camp's cheer competition.

For BSC's cheerleaders, preparing to get crowds of people—as well as players—pumped up for the games requires high energy and hard work. "The time commitment for cheerleading is not as strenuous as that of the college's athletics teams, but the training and games can be demanding," remarks Waters. "For that reason, we incorporate mandatory cardiovascular activities such as running and strength training into the practices."

The cheerleaders practice balance, cheers, dances, and formations two to four times a week for one to two hours per day. When the squad performs on the field and the court this academic year, they will don their new two-piece black uniforms with gold lettering and trim.

Historically, the cheerleading program at Birmingham-Southern has been around a long time, and in more recent years, has been competitive. In 1988-90, BSC cheerleaders made it to the NCAA National Cheerleader Association competition three times, finishing 8th, 10th, and 13th respectively. "Once the cheerleading program becomes fully established, we want the team to begin competing again," says Waters.

The BSC cheerleaders will hold a clinic for area girls and boys ages 5-14 this fall to teach them the latest in cheers and chants. Participants also will have an opportunity to cheer at a BSC football game. Visit www.bscsports.net throughout the fall for more details about the clinic.

BSC SET TO INTRODUCE THE SPORT OF LACROSSE TO CAMPUS, PLAY BEGINS IN SPRING 2008

Unless you're from the northeast corner of America—the country's breeding ground for lacrosse—you're probably only remotely familiar with the sport and have hardly come across men or women on a field flinging a rubber ball in all directions using a basket on a stick.

But the game of lacrosse is gaining popularity in middle and high schools across the United States and increasingly among colleges and universities all over the globe. Several high schools in the Birmingham area now offer the sport as well. Now, it's been added to the sports offerings at Birmingham-Southern.

"We brought lacrosse to the campus because it is one of the fastest growing sports in the country and making rapid strides of growth in the South," says Joe Dean Jr., BSC athletics director. "We wanted to be on the cutting edge of this growth and provide students in the South with an opportunity to play college lacrosse closer to home and at an institution of academic distinction, which normally appeals to lacrosse players."

Sports Illustrated magazine two years ago named lacrosse as the fastest-growing sport in America. And according to a spokesperson for US Lacrosse, the national governing body of the men's and women's sport, lacrosse is steadily increasing in schools and communities at an overall growth rate of 15 percent each year. "Lacrosse is a very appealing game," says the spokesman, "and historically, it is

the oldest team sport in North America. Also, organizations like ours have helped to promote the game even more."

Lacrosse—a combination of the elements of soccer, basketball, and hockey—is a field game typically played in the spring by two teams of 10-12 players on the field, each of whom uses a long-handled stick with a net pouch on one end to carry or throw a small, hard ball into the opponent's goal.

Although the rules for lacrosse are different for each gender, and the men's roster is substantially larger, the game basics still apply. "The



major difference is that the men's game is full body contact—they wear helmets and upper body pads," explains Emily Thomas, a New Jersey native and head coach for women's lacrosse at BSC. "The women's game is less contact and more a game of finesse."

Each game begins with a center face-off for men as in ice hockey and a draw for women likened to a basketball tip-off. In men's lacrosse, the positions consist of a goalie, plus defensemen, midfielders, and attack men, all in groups of three.

Lacrosse originally was an indigenous game among Native Americans in Canada, who played

lacrosse not only for recreation, but also to settle disputes and for a variety of rituals, including communicating with the spirit world. The game was adopted by French settlers in the late 19th

century and was so well-liked that it quickly became Canada's national game.

Birmingham-Southern, which added a women's lacrosse program in 2006, now fields 21 sports teams with the more recent addition of men's lacrosse which begins play in the 2008-09 academic year.

Andy Bonasera, head coach for the men, and Thomas will lead the college into its first lacrosse season in the spring of 2009. Both the men's and women's lacrosse teams will play an independent schedule for the first few seasons and then transition to the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference once the minimum number of required teams joins the conference.

Some of BSC's nearby competitors will be Sewanee in Tennessee and the University of Dallas. Home games will be played at the new BSC football stadium.

"Several Division I schools in the Southern region have already added lacrosse to their sports offerings," says Thomas. "We feel fortunate to be in their numbers."



Thomas



Bonasera

NEW TRACK AND FIELD PROGRAM OFF AND RUNNING

The cross country program at Birmingham-Southern sprang to life in 1997; now it is putting down even deeper roots.

Next spring, the college's inaugural indoor/outdoor track and field team of men and women will compete in the Division III Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference. The team will practice and host meets on a state-of-the-art eight-lane regulation track that will be added around BSC's new football field, currently under construction. The track is expected to be ready for use after the fall 2007 term. The team will hold its indoor meets at off-campus venues.

Birmingham-Southern Athletics Director Joe Dean Jr. announced during the fall 2006 semester the addition of track and field. "Adding men's and women's track and field to our athletics program is a natural move for us and one which will complement our excellent cross country program," says Dean. "I am excited that Lars Porter and Mark Everett have accepted the challenges of building a quality track and field program for Birmingham-Southern."

Porter, head coach for cross country and track and field, tabbed three-time Olympian Everett this past January as the new assistant coach for both programs. A 2004 Birmingham-Southern graduate, Porter was the college's top male long-distance runner in each of his four years as a student-athlete. Everett was a 10-time All-American at the University of Florida and was a 12-time national champion.

"Our focus is on running since neither Coach Everett nor I have participated in technical events such as the pole vault," says Porter. "We



BSC junior Forrest Boughner ran a 15:23 in the 5K track event at Auburn University as a freshman.

have, however, learned how to coach a few of these technical events over the years and can apply simple aspects of training, but we'll be bringing in outside help for the majority of the work."

The coaches will be busy year-round with practices, meets, and travel. The cross country races are held in the fall, indoor track competes in the winter, outdoor track is in the spring, and extended practices take place throughout the summer. "We're going to try to balance each track season with hard and easy races to enable students to compete at their best," says Porter.

"We plan to grow the track and field program by simply bringing in more numbers and better talent every year. As our runners become more competitive, it will be easier to convince more students to join the sport."

The men's and women's track and field teams currently consist of 35 student-athletes, with recruitment still open. "The distance runners are primarily experienced upperclass-

men, while the sprinters, jumpers, and hurdlers are mostly a freshman roster," remarks Porter. "We expect that number to grow by the spring as other sports end their seasons and several of those players join the track and field team."

BSC's first four years of track and field competition are under the mandatory NCAA compliance period before becoming eligible for postseason competition in 2011-12.

And, the sport of track and field has some unique rules when it comes to competitions. As a Division III program, Birmingham-Southern will face SCAC competitors on a regular basis, but also attend the larger meets held at NCAA Division I schools, including Auburn, Alabama, and Georgia Tech. "If any of our student-athletes are talented enough to qualify for the large national meets such as the Penn or Texas relays, we will get them there," remarks Porter.

"This is an exciting time to be a part of Birmingham-Southern athletics, especially track and field."



New conference provides BSC with fresh start in athletics

Change fills the air at Birmingham-Southern as the college officially transitions into the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference (SCAC) this fall with the addition of football. BSC is the 12th and newest member of the NCAA Division III league, composed of some of the most prestigious liberal arts colleges and universities in the nation.

Birmingham-Southern's SCAC membership will be effective for the 2007-08 academic year for the sports of baseball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, tennis, track and field, soccer, and volleyball. The Panthers will begin future SCAC participation in softball and men's and women's lacrosse in 2008-09. The college's rifle squad competes annually in the Southeastern Air Rifle Conference.

"The addition of Birmingham-Southern College signals a message from our presidents that we are committed to providing an athletics environment for student-athletes that reflects two important aspects—a first-class liberal arts education and the opportunity to compete with similar colleges and universities at the Division III level," said SCAC Commissioner Steve Argo during the 2006 announcement. "We are excited about the conference gaining Birmingham-Southern, and we look forward to a long and lasting membership."

The SCAC currently consists of Austin College of Sherman, Texas; BSC; Centre College of Danville, Ky.; Colorado College of Colorado Springs, Colo.; DePauw University of Greencastle, Ind.; Hendrix College of Conway, Ark.; Millsaps College of Jackson, Miss.; Oglethorpe University of Atlanta, Ga.; Rhodes College of Memphis, Tenn.; The University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn.; Southwestern University of Georgetown, Texas;

and Trinity University of San Antonio, Texas.

Eleven of the 12 institutions in the SCAC house Phi Beta Kappa chapters, as does BSC.

"The Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference is comprised of some of the most prestigious liberal arts colleges and universities in the nation, so we believe this is a natural fit for Birmingham-Southern College," says BSC President Dr. David Pollick. "This is a group of institutions among which we belong in terms of our academic mission and our intercollegiate athletics program. Our scholar-athletes can compete on the playing fields and courts while at the same time preparing for extraordinary careers."

The SCAC was founded and began operation with four member institutions in 1962 as the College Athletic Conference. Membership reached a then all-time high of eight in 1991 when the conference was renamed the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference. The conference celebrated its 15th anniversary as the SCAC during the 2005-06 academic year.

With headquarters in suburban Atlanta, the SCAC was formed to provide an association through which the member institutions might encourage organized competition in intercollegiate sports among teams that are representative of their respective student bodies. Members of this conference share a commitment to the overall quality of academic standards and educational experiences at their schools.

Under SCAC program guidelines, BSC will not be eligible for conference championships or post-season play for the next four years.

For more on the SCAC, visit its Web site at www.scac-online.org.