

## 2005 Keydet Outlook

As the VMI lacrosse program enters its third season in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference, head coach Doug Bartlett and the rest of the Keydets know exactly where they want to be at season's end: Poughkeepsie, N.Y., battling it out with three other teams for the MAAC Championship. And although they're coming off a disappointing season, the Keydets think this could be the year they make their first postseason appearance in the MAAC.

"I think last year we went from the hunter to the hunted," said Bartlett in reference to the 2004 season that saw the Keydets go winless after a 4-4 mark in their initial MAAC campaign a season earlier. "We surprised people our first year, but everybody's guns were loaded for us last season. But we were still competitive, losing one or two-goal games to Siena, Wagner, St. Joe's and even the regular season champions Marist. We think we can build off of that for this season, our guys are hungry to get back to winning those close ones this season."

The Keydets should definitely have the firepower to do so this season, with each of their six leading goal scorers returning from last season. Also among the 21 letterwinners returning from last season, against just six lost, are all three goalkeepers that saw game action last season. Add in one of the top recruiting classes in recent years, and there is reason to see why everyone is excited for the 2005 season to kick off.

"Our biggest strength this season will be our depth," said Bartlett. "Having quality depth helps in so many ways. It leads to better competition day in and day out in practice and in games, because you know if you're not playing up to par, there's guys on the sideline that can step in. Depth is always a key here at VMI, and this is the deepest team we've ever had."

### Attackmen

With six of their seven double-digit scorers returning this season, the Keydets will count on a number of upperclassmen to lead the way up front this season.

Senior **Gabe McCaig** returns after a knee injury midway through last season. Though his 18 points through six games still ranked third-highest on the team at season's end, you can be sure that McCaig will be looking to post much better numbers in a full season of action as a senior.

Stepping up in McCaig's absence was junior **Robert Trimble**, who returns as the Keydets' top scorer from a year ago. His 11 goals, 14 assists and 25 points all represented career bests, while his assists total nearly doubled that of his next closest teammate.

Junior **Will Collier** ranked second on the team with 15 goals last season, and has come in this season determined to make a difference up front. Also in the starting mix will be 2003 second team All-MAAC selection **Leo McInerney**, who rejoins the team as a senior after missing the 2004 campaign. McInerney, who currently ranks 15th on the VMI career points list, has tallied 42 goals and 28 assists in only two seasons with the Keydets.

A fresh face up front this year will be that of **Kevin Hill**, a very talented freshman from Rockville Centre, N.Y. Hill led South Side HS to their first New York Class B State Championship while being named All-Nassau County.

Another pair of underclassmen may figure into the mix before the season wraps up. Sophomore **Brad Pruitt** spent fall semester overseas, but brings great size to the Keydet attack. Freshman **Matt Harrison** has proven to be too solid of a player to not see playing time somewhere, and may see time on either the attack or at midfield.

"We really like what we have up front this year," said Bartlett. "With Gabe coming back at 100%, along with Will and Robert who stepped up last year for us, we have a lot of experience. Then having Leo back gives us phenomenal depth, and we're real excited to see what Kevin can do."

### Midfielders

In the midfield, the Keydets will once again look to senior tri-captain **Erik Rohrmann** for leadership on and off the field. Rohrmann, last year's leading goal-scorer with 18, will lead a unit that will mix veterans with a good number of underclassmen.

Senior **Jeff Rummell** will look to shake off a frustrating junior season after bulking up and improving his game over the past year. Another middle who has made great strides over the past year has been sophomore **Steve Long**, who came out this fall determined to be a go-to player for the Keydets.

Junior **David Trimble** figures to be another solid contributor in the midfield for the Keydets, along with junior **Joe Picairello** and sophomore **Eric Harley**, who is coming off a good fall season.

Junior **Tony Cavalero** will return for his third year at face-off middle and his second season as the Keydet's top face-off man. However, freshman **Vinnie Pierotti**, a strong tough player who can make things happen with the ball, may push Cavalero for that top spot by season's end.

At defensive middle, added depth should help the Keydets to run two lines, with senior **Adam Noelte** and junior **Matt Hill** as the top pairing. Noelte gained a lot of experience last year, playing in 10 games, while Hill brings quickness to the position after seeing action in all but one game last season. Two talented sophomores will also see time, as both **Greg Schwartz** and **Andy Milford** are coming off of solid fall campaigns.



Senior **Gabe McCaig** is expected to lead the Keydet attack after missing half of last season due to a knee injury.



Senior **Leo McInerney** ranks in the top 15 in school history in career points after playing only two seasons.

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### Defense

Defensive coordinator Mic Grant feels confident with a Keydet defense that boasts six upperclassmen, led by senior tri-captain **Jay Morgan**. Morgan has started every game over the past two seasons on defense for the Keydets, and nothing should change that fact this season.

The battle for the other two starting defenseman positions should come down to three players, junior **Lee Cook**, sophomore **Alex Litz** and sophomore **Curtis Jaques**. However, it's not just the veterans that will see time in the defense. A pair of talented freshmen lie in waiting in **Brett Whitsitt** and **Patrick Zanelotti**. Each of the Virginia-bred defenders were named all-district and all-region, and will most likely see extensive time on the field this season.

A pair of sophomores are also expected to see time in **Ryan Benson** and **Jason LaCerde**. Benson has worked extremely hard over the offseason in the weight room and increased his defensive awareness, while LaCerde spent the fall semester overseas. He will be counted on as an in-close defender, and brings a good lacrosse IQ to the position.

As far as the long-sticks go, the Keydets have two solid performers who bring diverse looks to the position. Sophomore **Charles Barnes** saw action in every game last season, starting seven, while junior **Clay Tharrington** played in seven games last year. Both are learning how to run the field and create transition, and may be pushed by a talented freshman in **Matt Turner**.

### Goalkeeper

The biggest question mark of the Keydets' lineup comes at the goalkeeper position. Senior **Matt Hook** would appear to be the front-runner for the starting spot going into the season, having seen the most action last season. However, juniors **Kelley DeNeen** and **Dan Frank** are right there in the discussion as well.

"We're still waiting for one kid to jump out and claim the job," said Bartlett. "We don't want to have to make the decision, hopefully one of these guys will make the decision for us with his play."

### Schedule

Another challenging schedule awaits the 2005 Keydets, as match-ups against one of the top programs in the country, Duke, and fellow service academy Air Force highlight a schedule that features nine home contests, against only five road games.

The Keydets kick off their season on Feb. 24, when first-year program Bellarmine comes to town. Three days later, Air Force comes to Lexington for the first time since 1995. Following a trip to Durham, N.C. to take on Duke on March 1, the Keydets' return home for a stretch of six home games out of seven contests, the last of which is the 18th annual Lee-Jackson Lacrosse Classic vs. Washington & Lee. The showdown will take place on April 13 and returns to Alumni Memorial Field for the first time in four seasons.

"We really like what we've been able to do with our schedule this year," said Bartlett. "Having a military school like Air Force coming to Lexington is exciting for us. It's always good to play a top program like Duke, and we get to hopefully start some new rivalries with a pair of teams that are in their first year with Bellarmine and Robert Morris. We have a return match against Holy Cross from the Patriot League, and of course the Lee-Jackson game is going to be back here on Alumni Memorial Field. Our kids are really excited to have the game back over here and the fact that we have a lot more home games this season."

A solid MAAC schedule awaits the Keydets as well, as the team looks to avenge many of those narrow losses from a year ago. The Keydets will host last year's tournament champions, Providence, on March 26 and will honor their seniors on April 9, when they host Manhattan at Patchin Field. Key in-conference road trips come at the end of April, as the Keydets wrap up the season with three road games in their final four outings. On April 23, the Keydets travel to Buffalo to take on last year's second-place team Canisius, then a week later pay a visit to Marist, last year's undefeated regular-season champions. Their results in those late-season contests may determine whether they will make a return trip to Poughkeepsie a week-and-a-half later for the 2005 MAAC Championships.

### Outlook

With one of the deepest teams the Keydets may have ever put on the field, this year's team is ready to put last year behind them and prove to the rest of the MAAC that the 2003 squad is more what teams can expect out of the VMI lacrosse program.

"Our guys can't wait to get back out on the field," said Bartlett. "We have goals this year, to be at least .500 out of conference and to bring the spirit of the game back to the Lee-Jackson Classic. But where we want to be is one of the top four teams in our league, battling for the championship in May."



Senior defenseman **Jay Morgan** has started every contest on defense for the Keydets the last two seasons.



Senior tri-captain **Erik Rohrmann** led the team in goals last year from the midfield.