

Quick Facts

General

LocationLexington, Va.
 Founded1839
 Enrollment1,300
 NicknameKeydets
 ColorsRed, White & Yellow
 Home FieldPatchin Field (Grass/Cap. 1000)
 AffiliationNCAA Division I
 ConferenceBig South
 SuperintendentGeneral J.H. Binford Peay, III '62
 Athletic DirectorDonny White '65

Team Information

Head CoachBryan Williams (Washington & Lee '81)
 Phone(540) 464-7608
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 Record at VMI7-12 (Second season)
 Career Record37-90-9 (Seventh season)
 Assistant CoachTresy Ross (Austin '04)
 2004 Record7-12, 1-7 Big South
 Starters Returning/Lost10/2
 Letterwinners Returning/Lost12/4
 Newcomers6

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Credits

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2006 Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Opponent</u>	<u>Site</u>	<u>Time</u>
Aug. 25	Wofford	Home	4 p.m.
<i>Sept. 1</i>	<i>at The Citadel</i>	<i>Charleston, S.C.</i>	<i>5 p.m.</i>
<i>Sept. 8</i>	<i>at Wagner</i>	<i>Staten Island, N.Y.</i>	<i>4 p.m.</i>
<i>Sept. 10</i>	<i>at Manhattan</i>	<i>Riverdale, N.Y.</i>	<i>10 a.m.</i>
<i>Sept. 13</i>	<i>at Roanoke</i>	<i>Roanoke, Va.</i>	<i>4:30 p.m.</i>
Sept. 17	Delaware State	Home	1 p.m.
<i>Sept. 20</i>	<i>at High Point*</i>	<i>High Point, N.C.</i>	<i>7 p.m.</i>
Sept. 23	Winthrop*	Home	1 p.m.
<i>Sept. 26</i>	<i>at Appalachian State</i>	<i>Boone, N.C.</i>	<i>3 p.m.</i>
Sept. 30	Radford*	Home	4 p.m.
Oct. 3	Liberty*	Home	4:30 p.m.
<i>Oct. 8</i>	<i>at Coastal Carolina*</i>	<i>Conway, S.C.</i>	<i>2 p.m.</i>
Oct. 10	Southern Virginia	Home	4 p.m.
<i>Oct. 15</i>	<i>at UNC Asheville*</i>	<i>Asheville, N.C.</i>	<i>2 p.m.</i>
<i>Oct. 18</i>	<i>at Longwood</i>	<i>Farmville, Va.</i>	<i>7 p.m.</i>
Oct. 21	Charleston Southern*	Home	1 p.m.
Oct. 22	South Carolina State	Home	1 p.m.
<i>Oct. 29</i>	<i>at Birmingham-Southern*</i>	<i>Birmingham, Ala.</i>	<i>2 p.m.</i>
<i>Nov. 2-5</i>	<i>at Big South Championships</i>	<i>Conway, S.C.</i>	<i>TBA</i>
All Times Eastern		*-Denotes Big South Contest	

2 2006 Team Outlook

Three years ago, the Virginia Military Institute fielded the first women's varsity team in the 164-year history of the institution, as the Keydet women's soccer team won its debut match against Bridgewater by a 4-0 count. As the program now enters its fourth season, five players that were freshmen that first year will look to cap off their senior season in style, by leaving a lasting impression with the most successful campaign in the program's young history.

But improving upon last season may prove difficult. In his first year at the helm, head coach Bryan Williams shepherded his squad to a record seven wins and a pair of milestone victories, as the Keydets knocked off Youngstown State by a 2-0 score in early September for its first-ever victory over a Division I opponent and later defeated High Point for its first Big South Conference triumph. And while that win, along with an overtime loss at home to regular season champions UNC Asheville, proved that the Keydets could play with any program in the Big South, it is within the league standings that those five seniors can leave their mark on the program.

As the team enters its third season in the Big South, they go searching for their first trip to the Conference Championship, an opportunity that they just missed last season, when a win at Winthrop on the regular season's final day would have sent them to their first postseason. But Williams knows that getting back to that point this season won't be that easy.

"Last season, I believe that we proved that VMI Women's Soccer can play with the teams of the Big South Conference," said Williams. "This season, I'm excited to get another chance to take on those teams, but at the same time, we know that those teams will not be taking us lightly or for granted. We have to come in prepared for each contest, take one match at a time and keep in perspective what we are trying to do as a group. If we can do these things, then we can achieve our goals, the first of which is making the tournament at the end of the season. Last season, we were very close to achieving that goal, and I know that our seniors, our upperclassmen and even our freshmen are ready to prove that VMI women's soccer is here not only within the Conference, but also on the Division I level."

The 2006 squad may be the most balanced in the history of the program, as five seniors will be joined by four juniors, three sophomores and six freshmen. The team returns ten starters from a year ago, including its leading scorer and 100% of its minutes played in goal. Here's a look at each position on the field for the Keydets this season:

Forward

The 2005 season was undoubtedly the breakthrough campaign for **Alexa Bernas**, who set new single-season school records with 15 goals, six assists, 36 points, and five game-winning tallies. As a junior this season, she will again be expected to pace the Keydet offense, while combining with a new running mate up top in sophomore **Megan Strand**. Strand, who was a standout on the backline last season as a freshman will be moved forward this season, back to her natural position where she played in high school.

Other possible contributors to the forward position this season include senior Karen Bill, who will see most of her time starting at the attacking midfield spot, as well as newcomer **Alexi Staton**, the all-time leading scorer at Roanoke, Va.'s Northside High School. Staton proved herself as a hard-working player early in preseason drills, and her aggressive style of play will be utilized in a number of roles for the Keydets this season.

Midfield

The Keydet midfield is expected to feature great balance this season, with both upperclassmen and newcomers slated for major roles. The discussion begins with **Karen Bill**, a four-year starter who is the only player to start every contest since the program attained varsity status. Described by Williams as the heart of the team last season, Bill will be counted on to provide leadership on the field from her attacking midfield spot and off the field as team captain. She is expected to join fellow first classman **Anya Kovarik** in the center of the midfield, as Kovarik returns to her role in the defensive midfield. A tough, relentless defensive player, Kovarik will be asked to provide leadership in the center as well.

On the outside, junior **Gia Bichara** will return to her role on the left side, while she is expected to be joined by newcomer **Audrey Falconi** on the right. Bichara enjoyed a fantastic season in 2005, as she ranked third on the team with five goals and 12 points while playing at outside mid. She will be expected to once again create offensive opportunities from the left side, as she is slated to be joined by the freshman Falconi, one of the team's three Nevadans, who brings a great amount of foot skills, quickness and a tremendous work ethic to the squad.

Other options in the midfield include junior **Erin Squires**, a tenacious attacking option who had an outstanding spring season, seniors **Vanessa Berrios** and **Raevon Pulliam** and the freshman, Staton. Berrios returns following a solid but injury-plagued season, but will most likely see time at the outside midfield or outside back position this season. Pulliam's quickness will be utilized on the outside as well this season, while her leadership off the field will be a key contribution as well.

Defense

Last season, the Keydets established a new team record for fewest goals allowed in a season, thanks in large part to some new faces along the backline. This season, even more new faces will enter the fold on defense, giving the team a young but versatile look on defense.

Senior **Hatley Clifford** will be counted on as the veteran presence among the backline, as she returns after a standout season during which she did an outstanding job marking several of the top scorers in the Big South last season. A member of the Keydet track & field squad, Clifford will utilize her speed and stamina along the sidelines while limiting the opposition's scoring opportunities. She will team with sophomore **Celine Ziobro** at outside back, following Ziobro's impressive freshman campaign, during much of which she was thrown into the fire as the team's sweeper. This season, the talented defender will be given more freedom to attack from the outside.

Newcomers may be counted on at the center back and sweeper positions, with **Jessica Robbins** and **Chrissy Beach** currently slated for starting slots. Robbins enters the Institute following a standout senior year at Bruton HS in Williamsburg. She brings a wealth of experience to the club and will be counted on at the center back position as the season begins. Beach, a freshman that comes to VMI from Las Vegas, is a deceptive player with excellent foot skills and an outstanding tackling ability that should suit her well at the sweeper position. Other options along the back include Berrios, Bichara, and possibly freshman keeper Kathleen Underwood.

Goalkeeping

One position that the Keydets should not have to worry about this season is in goal. The team returns **Jessica Rheinlander** for her third season at the Institute, having started every contest between the pipes since she stepped on post. However, this season she will be joined by two newcomers that will give the team the deepest keeper rotation the team has every had.

Kathleen Underwood joins the program following a successful career at Courtland HS, where she helped lead her team to the finals of the AA state championship as a junior. A dual threat as a goalkeeper and a defender, Underwood has impressed already with several dynamic saves in preseason drills. She is joined by fellow freshman **Béatrice Charles**, as the Keydets will feature three goalkeepers on the roster for the first time in the program's history.

Non-Conference Schedule

This season, the Keydets are slated for ten non-conference contests, with four of those coming at home and six on the road. Among the road trips the team will enjoy are early season matchups at The Citadel, a trip to New York City to take on both Wagner and Manhattan, a visit to the mountains of North Carolina to play Appalachian State, and two in-state trips for contests against Roanoke and Longwood.

"I think that our non-conference schedule this season could not have been any better or more appropriately done," said Williams. "There is a tremendous balance between teams that will challenge us to be the best team we can be while also giving us a great deal of exposure up and down the East Coast. We feel like it is a very competitive schedule for us that will also be attractive for young women looking to play VMI soccer in the future. We also hope to connect with many of the alumni in the areas we travel to this season. We're obviously looking forward to hosting a tough Wofford team for our home opener on August 25, then continue our rivalry with The Citadel, where we look forward to beating them on their home surface just as they did to us a year ago. Then we'll head to New York City for a pair of contests before returning home to begin preparation for the Big South."

Big South Conference

In 2005, the Keydets proved that they were able to play with even the best teams in the Big South Conference, with the breakthrough coming in a 4-2 victory over High Point, a team that entered that contest second in the League standings. This season, the team will be looking to make strides in the win column and assure themselves of their first entry into the League Championship. The going won't be easy though, as the team must face two of the three preseason favorites on the road in Coastal Carolina and High Point, while the team favored to win it all will come to Patchin for an Oct. 3 contest in the form of the Liberty Lady Flames.

"We're very excited to get the season underway," said Williams. "Now that we have experienced the League the first time around and learned about each team, we look forward to continuing to improve the program to make it a force to be reckoned with in the Big South Conference. I truly believe that VMI women's soccer can play with the teams in the Big South, and look forward to us continuing to prove that fact every time out this year."

As they enter their senior year, there's no doubt that five seniors in particular will give everything they have to prove their coach correct.

2006 VMI Women's Soccer

Numerical Roster

No.	Name	Cl.	Pos.	Ht.	Hometown/Previous School
00	Béatrice Charles	Fr.	GK	5-7	Fairfax Station, Va./Robinson Secondary
0	Kathleen Underwood	Fr.	GK/D	5-6	Spotsylvania, Va./Courtland
1	Jessica Rheinlander**	Jr.	GK	5-7	Manassas, Va./Forest Park
2	Megan Strand*	So.	F	5-4	Fredericksburg, Va./Stafford
4	Alexi Staton	Fr.	F	5-4	Roanoke, Va./Northside
5	Erin Squires**	Jr.	M/F	5-0	Mechanicsville, Va./Atlee
6	Raevon Pulliam***	Sr.	F/M	5-3	Yorktown, Va./Tabb
7	Chrissy Beach	Fr.	D/F	5-9	Las Vegas, Nev./Rancho
8	Gia Bichara**	Jr.	M/D	5-4	Chesapeake, Va./Great Bridge
9	Karen Bill***	Sr.	M/F	5-5	Yorktown, Va./Tabb
10	Anya Kovarik**	Sr.	M	5-6	Clayton, N.C./Wake Christian Academy
11	Vanessa Berrios***	Sr.	M/D	5-6	Yorktown, Va./Tabb
12	Audrey Falconi	Fr.	M	5-1	Las Vegas, Nev./Centennial
14	Hatley Clifford***	Sr.	M/D	5-5	Plano, Texas/Carrollton Christian
15	Celine Ziobro*	So.	D/M	5-6	Henderson, Nev./Green Valley
16	Alexa Bernas**	Jr.	F	5-5	Mechanicsville, Va./Atlee
20	Alexa Tarbona	So.	M	5-8	Richmond, Va./Mills Godwin
21	Jessica Robbins	Fr.	D/M	5-7	Williamsburg, Va./Bruton

*- Varsity Letters Earned

Head Coach: Bryan Williams (Washington & Lee '81), Second Season

Assistant Coach: Tresy Ross (Austin College '04), Second Season

Pronunciation Guide

Bernas- BURN-us	Raevon- RAY-von
Bichara- buh-CARE-ah	Rheinlander- RHINE-land-er
Berrios- BEAR-ree-ohs	Staton- STAY-ton
Falconi- fal-CO-nee	Ziobro- zee-AH-bro
Kovarik- co-VAR-ick	Tresy- TRAY-see

Spring Skills Clinic

Last spring, the VMI women's soccer program hosted their first skills clinic for girls of the Lexington community. The free event drew approximately 30 girls to Patchin Field as they learned skills from the team.

"From the perspective of both myself and the team, we enjoyed the afternoon and the ability to provide a fun, learning opportunity for the girls," said VMI head coach Bryan Williams. "To get between 25-30 girls out in our first ever clinic was really exciting. They learned skills that they had not been exposed to before, and I think this really set the groundwork for something that we'll look to continue next fall and spring. We hope this will encourage more girls and their families to come out and support us at our games next fall."

The girls were divided into four age groups, with the Keydet women's soccer players and coaches serving as instructors. Participants worked on drills concentrating on the fundamentals of soccer, including dribbling, passing, shooting, footwork and

goalkeeping. The experience proved to be rewarding not only for the participants, but for the instructors as well.

"Honestly, I could not have had a better time, teaching and being around the girls in my group, 'The Soccer Dolphins,' as we came to call ourselves," said junior midfielder Hatley Clifford, who worked with the seven and eight year-old group. "Their enthusiasm and eagerness inspired me, as it allowed me to glimpse at the game through their young eyes, as I once saw it as a young girl. I could not be more excited to participate in another soccer clinic, if given the opportunity."



Alphabetical Roster

7	Chrissy Beach	D/F
16	Alexa Bernas**	F
11	Vanessa Berrios***	M/D
8	Gia Bichara**	M/D
9	Karen Bill***	M/F
00	Béatrice Charles	GK
14	Hatley Clifford***	M/D
12	Audrey Falconi	M
10	Anya Kovarik**	M
6	Raevon Pulliam***	F/M
1	Jessica Rheinlander**	GK
21	Jessica Robbins	D/M
5	Erin Squires**	M/F
4	Alexi Staton	F
2	Megan Strand*	F
20	Alexa Tarbona	M
0	Kathleen Underwood	GK/D
15	Celine Ziobro*	D/M