

William and Mary entered last season with a number of talented but unproven players, as just one starter returned from the 2005 squad that won 22 matches and posted a 15-3 mark in conference play. Though the '06 edition of the Tribe was unable to match the achievements of the previous season, the team gained valuable experience and began to lay a foundation for even greater success. Led by five returning starters, the Tribe is poised for a great season and could once again emerge as one of the Colonial Athletic Association's top teams.

"We are going to be young again, but we return a number of sophomores and juniors with significant playing experience," **Head Coach Debbie Hill** said. "We also are adding three highly talented and hard-working freshmen who have the ability to come in and compete for playing time right away. I think it is going to be a really great blend of returning players and incoming freshmen. I am excited about this season, and I think we are going to be significantly stronger."

While Hill cites the experience of the returnees as an obvious strength, she is also impressed with the players' leadership qualities. Additionally, she feels that the squad's team chemistry will also translate into success.

"The experience of our younger players is one of our biggest strengths," Hill said. "Our core starters have been in their roles for a year or two and understand what it takes to be successful. The team is also an extremely close and tight-knit group. The players communicate with each other well on the court and get along well off the court. The team chemistry we had with this group last spring was among the very best I have had during my 30 years of coaching."

Setters

One of the Tribe's strongest positions should be the setter spot, which is a role junior co-captain **Kim Mount** will fill. Selected as the 2005 CAA Rookie of the Year, Mount followed up her impressive rookie campaign with an outstand-

ing sophomore season. The Corte Madera, Calif., native ranked third in the conference in assists (12.13), while her 1,201 helpers marked the third-best single-season total in school history. Additionally, she finished second on the team with 216 digs and registered 10 double-doubles.

"Kim is our most experienced player, and she will be a key to our success," Hill said. "She is one of the hardest workers on the team and is probably our best athlete. She will be an important leader for us."

While Mount will see the majority of playing time as the primary setter, freshman **Cassie Crumal** will also see action. A four-year letter-winner at Chaparral High School in Castle Rock, Colo., Crumal finished her prep career as the program's all-time assists leader (1,812). A two-time all-state honoree, she also set the school's single-season assists record as a senior, dishing out 1,097 helpers.

"Cassie has a very high level of technical ability and will be a very nice compliment to Kim," Hill said. "She is very similar to Kim in that she is very energetic and highly skilled."

Outside/Opposite Hitters

Another area of strength for the Tribe should be its hitters, led by All-CAA candidate junior **Abbi Owens**. After transferring from Oklahoma last season, Owens established herself as one of the conference's most effective players. The St. Louis, Mo., native ranked eighth in the CAA with 3.71 kills per game and tallied double-digit kill totals on 15 occasions. Her finest performance of the season came in the win against Georgia State (Oct. 14) when she equaled a single-match school record with 30 kills.

"Abbi is our most experienced outside hitter and was our go-to player last year," Hill said. "She is very motivated and competitive. As long as she is able to remain healthy, she should be even better this season."

Also slated to compete in the outside hitting position is talented sophomore **Lindsey Pflugner**. She had a very solid freshman season



Junior Co-Captain Kim Mount

in 2006 and ranked second on the team with 3.35 kills per game. Additionally, she finished the year with six double-doubles and earned at least 10 kills in 12 matches. Her best effort came in the victory against Stony Brook (Sept. 1) when she posted 24 kills on a .316 hitting percentage.

"Lindsey is probably our best all-around outside hitter and is very good both offensively and defensively," Hill said. "She has a very high level of ball control, and she hits a very heavy ball. Her competitiveness and enthusiasm also make her a great player."

Another returnee who figures to earn significant playing time is sophomore **Bryana Carey**. An important contributor for the Tribe last season, her jump serve is one of the best in the CAA. Last season, she ranked third in the league with 0.46 service aces per game. Her most outstanding performance came in the victory against Air Force (Sept. 2) when she recorded eight service aces, the second-best single-match total in school history.

"Bryana played a lot during her freshman year and is probably the most technically sound of all our players," Hill said. "She has a great jump serve and is a lot of fun on the court."

Fellow sophomore **Lauren Powell** also earned playing time as a freshman and should have an increased role this fall. She displayed her potential during a five-match span from Sept. 2-16 last year when she averaged 15.8 kills per match. Highlighting that impressive span was a 22-kill performance at Georgia State (Sept. 8).

"Lauren has an incredible amount of untapped potential," Hill said. "She is very quick and mobile and is a great hitter. A quietly effective player, she is working on continuing to bring finesse to her game."

Sophomore **Jillian Brown** is another player who worked hard during her freshman season and should continue to elevate her game in 2007. While she only appeared in nine games last year, she showed a glimpse of her talent with a solid effort in the win against Hampton (Oct. 31).



The talented 2007 Tribe squad should provide plenty of excitement.

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"Jillian is very hardworking and improved enormously during her freshman year," Hill said. "She is an incredibly positive player and always has a smile on her face."

Bolstering the hitting corps this season is freshman **Erin Skipper**, a local product from Tabb High School in Yorktown, Va. A highly accomplished prep player, she earned first-team all-state accolades as a senior and was a member of the Virginia East All-Star Team.

"Erin is very talented and has the ability to earn significant playing time this season," Hill said. "She is the consummate team player and brings a lot of heat to her offensive game. I expect her to be an important contributor in the future."

Middle Blockers

Because the Tribe graduated two four-year starters at the middle blocker position in 2005, last season provided an opportunity for a new group of players to gain valuable experience. With the entire unit of blockers returning, the group will be counted on to provide production and leadership.

The squad's lone senior is **Megan McInnes**. The Wayne, Pa., native played a significant role last year and ranked third on the team with 48 total blocks. Though she only began to emerge as a key player as a junior, Hill expects McInnes to have a breakout year during her final season at the College.

"Megan is potentially our most dangerous blocker, and she is the hardest worker on our team," Hill said. "She has incredible determination and dedication to the team concept."

Junior **Molly Bohman** also returns to the mix and hopes to follow up last season with continued success. Last year, she led the team with a .281 hitting percentage, which ranked 10th in the CAA. Additionally, she was second on the squad with 57 blocks, while her 168 kills ranked fourth on the team. Her best effort came in the triumph against Georgia State (Oct. 14) when she nearly earned a triple-double, totaling 11 kills, nine digs and seven blocks.



Junior Co-Captain Jo Sotto

"Molly is a very versatile middle blocker and has the flexibility to play middle or right side," Hill said. "She raised her level of play last year enormously, and she has a very steady personality on the court."

Sophomore **Katie McCarney** had an immediate impact as a freshman last season and should continue to play a valuable role in the Tribe's success this year. While she posted impressive stats throughout the campaign, her best efforts came at the end of 2006 when she averaged 9.4 kills per game on a .451 hitting percentage during the final five contests.

Joining the Tribe blockers this season is freshman **Ginny Bray** of Athens Drive High School in Cary, N.C. Highly talented, Hill expects her to compete for a starting spot right away. A four-year letterwinner at ADHS, she was honored as the conference player of the year following her junior season. In addition to helping her team claim the conference championship three times, she was selected as the squad's most valuable player twice.

"Ginny is very similar to Katie McCarney in that she is extremely athletic and quick," Hill said. "She is very mobile and could be one of our best middle blockers."

Libero/Defensive Specialists

Perhaps the greatest challenge for the Green and Gold this season will be replacing Kathleen Hawley, who graduated last year as the program's all-time digs leader. While Hawley's departure creates some uncertainty, the Tribe is fortunate to have two talented players ready to step in and fill the void.

After playing sparingly during her first two seasons at W&M, junior co-captain **Jo Sotto** will be relied on for leadership and solid play this year. She finished 2006 ranked fifth on the team with 178 digs and registered double-digit dig totals on seven occasions. Her best stretch of performances came during a three-match span from Sept. 16-23 when she averaged 15.3 digs per match.

"Jo's level of play and range has expanded significantly," Hill said. "While her defensive ability is really amazing, her leadership qualities will also be important in the success of our team."

Like Sotto, junior **Jill Nowadly** garnered limited playing experience during her freshman year but was a starting defensive specialist as a sophomore. Last season, she finished fourth on the team with 199 digs and recorded double-digit dig totals in nine matches. She tallied 10 or more digs in five consecutive contests from Sept. 27-Oct. 14, while posting a career-high 18 digs on two occasions.

"Jill has a great work ethic and trains very hard," Hill said. "She is very reliable, and no challenge is too difficult for her. Like Jo, she will see significant playing time this season."

Schedule

As is the case each season, the Tribe's 2007 schedule will provide the team with a chance to test itself against a wide array of talented opponents. This season's challenging slate features four tournaments and 28 contests with teams from across the country. Highlighting the non-conference portion of the schedule is a match



Senior Megan McInnes

with UCLA, which advanced to the NCAA Tournament national semifinals in 2006.

"We are going to play a very fun but challenging schedule this year, and the players are excited about that," Hill said. "Our non-conference schedule is somewhat tougher than last year, and the CAA competition is always tough. I expect us to perform well and to be very competitive within the conference."

The Tribe will begin its season with a pair of contests at the Virginia Tech Tournament on Aug. 24. W&M will take on the Hokies in the morning and Florida A&M in the afternoon. Last season, the Rattlers earned an invitation to the NCAA Tournament.

The following weekend, the Green and Gold will welcome three teams – East Carolina, Kent State and Southern Illinois – to Williamsburg for the annual Tribe Classic. W&M will open the Classic against ECU on Aug. 31 before battling the Golden Flashes and the Salukis on Sept. 1.

William and Mary will then travel across the country for the UC Irvine Tournament on Sept. 7-8. Southern Mississippi is the College's day one opponent, while UCLA and UC Irvine will challenge the Tribe on Sept. 8.

The Tribe will play its final regular-season tournament at Villanova the following weekend. W&M will square off against Binghamton and Princeton on Sept. 14 before matching up against Liberty and Villanova on Sept. 15.

While the remainder of the slate consists mostly of conference opponents, the Green and Gold has road matches scheduled at Norfolk State on Sept. 18 and at Hampton on Oct. 30.

The College's CAA home matches include: Virginia Commonwealth (Sept. 26), Georgia State (Oct. 12), UNC Wilmington (Oct. 13), Northeastern (Oct. 26), Hofstra (Oct. 27), Delaware (Nov. 8) and Towson (Nov. 9). Conference road contests include: UNC Wilmington (Sept. 21), Georgia State (Sept. 22), Towson (Oct. 5), Delaware (Oct. 6), George Mason (Oct. 19), James Madison (Oct. 20) and Virginia Commonwealth (Nov. 1).

The CAA Championship is scheduled for Nov. 16-18.