UNOH Men’s Basketball
Team Makes History

The University of Northwestern Ohio men’s basketball team entered the 2014-15 campaign knowing that they were in position to notch several program firsts after a season that saw them fall just short of reaching the NAIA Division II Men’s Basketball Championships in 2013-14. When all was said and done, the Racers had accomplished many of those feats, and they had positioned themselves well for the future as well.

UNOH qualified for their first ever trip to the NAIA National Tournament, grabbing a share of the Wolverine-Hoosier Athletic Conference crown in the process and setting a new program record for wins in a season.

The season began inauspiciously, with the Racers taking a sound defeat at the hands of the Bethel College (Ind.) Pilots on Halloween night in the Maple City Hoopfest at Goshen College, but the next afternoon, the Racers bounced back. UNOH took a 72-69 win over the Maple Leafs, and the victory marked the program’s 100th win since reinstatement in 2007-08. It was also the 100th collegiate coaching victory for head coach Chris Adams, the first of two personal milestones he reached on the season.

UNOH, however, struggled to gain traction in the first month of the season. The Racers suffered road defeats at two ranked opponents – Davenport and Cincinnati Christian – and after a home upset win over then-#11 Cornerstone University, the Racers fell at home in overtime to Concordia University, finishing the month of November with an overall record of just 4-4, and a 2-2 mark in WHAC play.

Once the calendar turned to December, the Racers began to roll. Back-to-back road wins in the WHAC over Lawrence Tech and Aquinas, and a home win over Siena Heights gave UNOH some much needed momentum heading into a trip to the Trip Sports Las Vegas Hoopla. In Las Vegas, the Racers picked up a key win over the University of St. Mary (Kan.), and they also defeated La Sierra University, heading home riding a five game winning streak.

The Racers dropped their final home game of 2014 to the University of Windsor, but the very next night, UNOH picked up a road win at Holy Cross College in which the Racers began to show glimpses of the team they were later to become. That night, UNOH displayed an ability to shoot the basketball that eventually developed into the team’s calling card, and as the WHAC season resumed, the Racers continued to improve.

UNOH won their first eight WHAC games of 2015, winning them in nearly every manner conceivable – ranging from a 103-79 blowout win over Marygrove College to a 67-65 nailbiter over Aquinas. The winning streak set up a showdown with Cornerstone again, this time in Grand Rapids, with the winner securing control of their own destiny for the WHAC crown.

The Racers took to the floor in the game without one of their best defenders – Ziar Anderson – and it showed in the game, as Cornerstone took a 94-67 win, but the defeat served to galvanize the UNOH team.

After another sound defeat of the Marygrove Mustangs, the Racers returned to Lima for a showdown with the Davenport Panthers, and UNOH was impressive from the start. The Racers led for most of the first half, shutting down the WHAC and eventual NAIA Division III player of the year Dominez Burnett, and in the final two minutes of the period UNOH rattled off 10 straight points to turn a four point lead into a 14-point halftime advantage. Davenport never recovered and the Racers took a crucial 95-78 win to keep their WHAC title hopes alive.

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Alumni Spotlight

Michael Brookes

Story written by Danny McPherson of The Marion Star (www.marionstar.com). Used with permission.

Local NASCAR fans won’t see former Marion resident Michael Brookes on the telecast of the Daytona 500 on Sunday.

That doesn’t mean the job Brookes has in the racing industry isn’t an important one.

Brookes, 25, is the son of Lance and Angie Brookes of Marion. He is a 2008 graduate of Pleasant High School where he played center for Spartan playoff teams, and a 2012 UNOH graduate.

Brookes is a NASCAR mechanic in teardown for Team Penske racing at the Penske headquarters shop at Mooresville, N.C. He is involved in the dismantling of cars driven by former NASCAR champ Brad Keselowski and Joey Logano so they can be examined.

“After the cars come to the shop from a track, they go through a series of events,” Brookes said. “They come to my unit where we tear things like the suspension and seats out.

“All that is left is the body. There is no engine or no drive train in it. That stuff goes elsewhere for examination.”

From there, it’s a secret. Brookes is not allowed to discuss other aspects of his job because of the competitive nature of the business.

“It is a secretive business,” Brookes said. “I am very in the dirt modified program at school (the University of Northwestern Ohio in Lima), there was stuff we couldn’t talk about.”

Brookes developed a love of racing at a young age.

“I was always a fan of racing, and I was NASCAR-oriented in high school,” Brookes said. “In high school, a friend of mine, whose name is Brandon Friend, was a big influence. He was a NASCAR enthusiast and there was a bond there. Ever since, it was a passion.”

After his graduation from Pleasant, Brookes was serving as an eighth-grade football coach for his alma mater when he made his decision to enter the auto racing field for real.

“I was leaning on the fence at the field one day and I thought I might as well take a shot at it because I knew I could always come back to Marion if I had to,” he said.

“I knew I wasn’t going to be an NFL Hall of Famer, and I knew NASCAR drivers just don’t show up and say, ‘I want to drive.’ So I knew if I was going to do anything, it was turning wrenches.”

After being sought after by Marion-area UNOH recruiter Joel Nichols, Brookes took what talents he had at the time to Northwestern Ohio.

“I had a little knowledge of auto mechanics,” he said. “I had just learned enough to get me to where I wanted to be.”

Brookes’ mother admitted she was surprised her son took the route he did after graduating from high school.

“He had played football since he was in the sixth grade, and I thought he would go to college and play football,” Angie Brookes said. “But Michael said this is what he wanted to do, and I am very proud of him now.”

While in college, Brookes was a member of a motorsports team on which he wound up being the highest-ranking member.

Brookes graduated from UNOH in 2012 with an associate’s degree in automotive high-performance technology.

Yet the university wasn’t done with him.

“The people there caught wind of this job with Penske and contacted me,” Brookes said. “I had interviews, and my first day on the job was Jan. 14 of this year.”

In between, Brookes worked with Quality Masonry of Marion and as the Pleasant eighth-grade coach.

Brookes had some work while in college as an over-the-wall pit man for a couple of drivers in the Camping World Truck Series.

That gave him a taste of what he might want to do someday.

“My ultimate goal was to get where I am right now,” Brookes said. “But I will sit down and evaluate and go forth. My next goal could be to go on the road and be a weekend warrior.”
UNOH Men’s Basketball Team Makes History Cont.

The Racers won their next three games in WHAC play handily, and they caught a bit of good fortune as Davenport was upset by Lourdes, the Racers Senior Day opponent. On the final Thursday night of the season, the Racers suddenly found themselves in position to take a share of the WHAC title if they could defeat the Gray Wolves. Lourdes battled the Racers fiercely, but in the end, the Racers triumphed on Senior Day, taking a share of the WHAC title with a 71-59 win and finishing the regular season with a 24-6 mark overall and a 19-3 mark in the WHAC.

The Racers dominated in their WHAC quarterfinal game, defeating Madonna University 91-65 and setting up a rubber match with Cornerstone. Unfortunately for the Racers, the Golden Eagles emerged victorious in the WHAC semifinal, taking a 95-85 win over the Racers, but UNOH was still able to advance to the NAIA National Tournament, taking the fourth at-large bid and earning a date with the Union College (Ky.) Bulldogs.

The Racers and Bulldogs opened the NAIA Tournament, playing the first game of the 32-team dance on a Wednesday morning at 8:30 a.m. local time, and the game was a close if not always crisp affair. The Racers had opportunities to win, but in the end, it was Union who survived to take the 64-58 victory to advance, and the Racers’ season came to a close with a program-record 25 wins.

Lawrence Jackson was named a second team NAIA All-American in his first season as a Racer, averaging a team-best 17 points and five rebounds per game. He also earned first team all-WHAC honors, along with his teammate Aaron Cross. Adams was named the WHAC’s Coach of the Year. Ed Jenkins and Josh Scott earned honorable mention All-WHAC status, and Anderson was named to the WHAC’s All-Defensive team.

UNOH set program records for Points, Field Goals Made, 3-Pointers Made, and Assists on the year as well. The season did mark the end of the UNOH careers for Jenkins, Cross, Jon Slagle, and Kermeriaz Harrington.

\[ \text{UNOH MBA} \]

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April

April 17 @ 4pm – Men’s Tennis vs. Marian University
April 17 @ 4pm – Women’s Tennis vs. Marian University
April 17 – Limaland Motorsports Park Season Opening Shootout
April 18 @ 10am – Men’s Tennis vs. Cornerstone University
April 18 @ 10am – Women’s Tennis vs. Cornerstone University
April 24 – Limaland Motorsports Park Spring Fling
April 25 @ 1pm – Men’s Baseball vs. Madonna University [Double Header]
April 26 @ 1pm – Men’s Baseball vs. Madonna University [Double Header]

May

May 1 – Limaland Motorsports Park Modified Mayhem
May 8 – Limaland Motorsports Park Meet the Drivers Night
May 11 – College of Applied Technologies: Session Begins
May 15 – Limaland Motorsports Park 80th Anniversary Race with Ken Schrader
May 22 – Limaland Motorsports Park Memorial Cup
May 25 – Memorial Day, Campus Offices Closed
May 29 – Limaland Motorsports Park 16th Annual Steve Brown Memorial

June

June 5 – Limaland Motorsports Park Open Wheel Shootout
June 12 – Limaland Motorsports Park 14th Annual Keyser Memorial with Kenny Wallace
June 14 – UNOH Graduation
June 19 – Limaland Motorsports Park Run for the Rabbit XV
June 26 – Limaland Motorsports Park 33rd Annual Ohio Sprint Speedweek
June 29 – College of Applied Technologies: Session Begins