In her third year as Bethel’s head softball coach, Anna Welsh led her players to the most successful season in team history. Ending the spring 2007 season 45-10, the team tied the school record for season wins, matching the record set during the 1995 season under Coach Drew Peterson. The team was also crowned NCCAA National Champions. And, after injuries early in the season, Welsh’s team did it with a limited number of players on the active roster.

Welsh credits team chemistry for the season’s success, noting how she and her coaching staff are intentional about planning activities for the players to bond both on and off the practice field. “I push the girls to avoid cliques,” says Welsh. “If you can get [chemistry], that is how you win. That’s the X factor.”

This effort to create a strong team dynamic earned Welsh and her staff the Great Lakes Region NAIA Coaching Staff of the Year by the National Fastpitch Coaches Association. “My goal is to get my players to connect on all the different levels — physically, mentally and spiritually,” says Welsh.

Once the team hit their stride, they experienced a 41-5 run following spring break and set the team record for conference wins, finishing 16-0 in the Mid-Central College Conference.

Going into the season, Welsh notes that she set realistic goals with the girls, aiming to make it to the NAIA National Tournament. “When we got there, I knew it wasn’t realistic to think we would win it all.” So she encouraged her players to enjoy themselves. “And we did very well,” she said. After being ranked 21st, the players beat the 9th- and 13th-ranked teams to finish 2-2.

Welsh now looks ahead to her fourth season with much excitement. “My goal is to get my players to connect on all the different levels — physically, mentally and spiritually,” says Welsh.

—Joy Noel Lightcap ('03)
MEN’S CROSS COUNTRY

The Pilots have run well in their early season meets, highlighted by a second place finish at the Bethel Invitational, the first home meet in three seasons. Our top five runners have been very consistent this year, however we are still looking for a couple guys to distinguish themselves as our sixth and seventh runners and close the gap,” said Coach Ryan Sommers.

WOMEN’S CROSS COUNTRY

The Pilots are off to an impressive start in their own right, winning the Bethel Invitational and being competitive in each of their meets.

“Every race the ladies leave it all on the course, which is a testimony to the senior leadership,” said Coach Sommers.

MEN’S GOLF

The Pilots have had an excellent fall with three runner-up finishes in tournaments already as they look to defend the MCC title they earned last season. “We must learn to start well and then finish strong,” said head coach Christopher Hess. “Once we learn this and execute it on the golf course, we’ll be a difficult team to beat.”

WOMEN’S GOLF

Coming off a top six finish at the NAIA National Tournament last spring, the Pilots look to have picked up right where they left off. They have shot their way to three tournament titles, including a third straight IMI conference crown and have set many scoring records along the way.

MEN’S SOCCER

With a tough national schedule, the Pilots have had to claw their way through the early season schedule. The fall has been highlighted by a pair of wins as they hosted the Bethel Invitational and they look to return to the top of the MCC and head into the post-season.

WOMEN’S SOCCER

The Pilots have been hit by early season injuries that have hampered their success so far this fall. A brutal early season schedule that saw them play their first six games on the road has hopefully prepared them for the rigors of the MCC.

MEN’S TENNIS

The Pilots have already had an impressive fall season that included a five-match winning streak as they have opened with a 6-2 record. “Our men are ready for the challenge and have played very well this fall,” said Bethel Director of Tennis John Natali.

WOMEN’S TENNIS

The Pilots look to be in full swing this fall and are off to a 6-2 start as well. “Coach Garza and I are both very proud of the efforts we have received from the entire team,” said Natali. “We have a very deep and talented squad this season and everyone has performed very well.”

VOLLEYBALL

The Pilots stand at an impressive 16-6 as they head into the heart of MCC competition. Several impressive performances in early season tournaments have prepared the team for the tests they are sure to face as they prepare for post-season success.

—PETE MOREY (’99, ’05)

For up-to-the-minute news and results on all of the Pilots teams, visit the official home of Bethel sports on the Web at: www.BethelCollege.edu/athletics/