

# **GCU Men's Swimming 2009-10**

There are a couple of ways to build a college swimming program, and Steve Schaffer is already having success with both of them in his second season as coach at Grand Canyon.

The first way is to attract home-grown talent such as Charles Woodruff, a junior from Phoenix who won a Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference championship in the 50-meter freestyle as a freshman and hasn't let up. Woodruff holds nine school records and is a preseason all-conference selection for 2009-10. He is the program's only third-year swimmer, an indication of how young the Antelopes are.

The second way is to lure international student-athletes such as junior transfer Artem Tretiakov of the Ukraine and freshman backstroker Johann Ivarsson of Sweden. Already this season, Tretiakov set a meet record in the 100 freestyle at the Fresno Pacific PCSC Relays and has made preseason all-conference. Both newcomers appear likely to post "A-cut" times that will automatically qualify them for the NCAA Division II championships in Canton, Ohio, in March.

"If you want to build it up fast, you go after the international kids," says Schaffer, who first learned about Tretiakov through a connection from the storied swimming program at Division I Indiana University. "You can beef up your quality quickly that way. Foreign kids are looking for an education and for someone to help pay for it.

"My hope is to do it half and half. We're trying to get good kids, and we're trying to build something special. There's not much of a swimming history at our school, and we need to introduce ourselves to local swimmers."

How's this for an introduction? In 2010-11, the GCU program will be fully funded, with the maximum 8.1 scholarships allowed by the NCAA for Division II. Schaffer says the upgrade in commitment is already drawing the attention of high school swimmers and coaches in Arizona.

"It's a step at a time, trying to build something like this," he says. "With our recruiting classes now, we can go for quality and not just quantity."

This season's roster of 13 is strongest in the sprints, led by Woodruff and Tretiakov. There have been surprises in freshmen Jess Hemming of Kiowa, Colo., and Nick Hoelzer of Nederland, Texas. Both have the thirst for improvement Schaffer is trying to establish as a hallmark of the program.

"They're raw but responding really well to training," the coach says.

Last season, Schaffer and assistants Randy Bellah and Susie Miller put the GCU men and women through a 24-week season. This season is broken up into two phases, a 15-week segment that extends into December and then a second portion focusing on the RMAC and NCAA meets in February and March. Among conference schools, Incarnate Word (San Antonio) is a clear favorite, but Schaffer expects the GCU men to be in the mix in only the third year of the program.

"We should be right behind them," he says. "But a year from now, we'll have a full recruiting class. We're only a couple of years away from challenging for the conference championship."