The unpredictable New England weather that local college baseball teams have to deal with annually has been especially uncooperative this year. Countless area teams including Holy Cross have had their schedules rearranged because of snow during the past month. The snow has forced non-league games to be cancelled and on the schedule to give the Crusaders valuable experience heading into Patriot League play.

Again last week the Crusaders were restricted to the field house for practices. One day the team managed to get outside, but the practice time was spent shoveling Fitton Field in hopes that it would dry out more quickly. Despite their efforts, they have still not had a practice on their home field since October.

Last Saturday, Holy Cross had a scheduled doubleheader at Stonehill College. However, Stonehill’s field was still soaking from the weather and was deemed unplayable. Eager to play baseball outdoors, the coaches agreed to play the game on Cape Cod in Harwich.

In the opener, Holy Cross used a fierce offensive attack to pound Stonehill, 9-3. The Crusaders connected for 10 hits, led by sophomores Craig Lemire and Eric Tapper, as well as senior Matt McEvoy and Eric Tapper, along with five strikeouts. Pat Maher closed out the game to allow the game to be played. Again going 2-for-2 in the nightcap. With the second round up, he went 3-for-3. The win improves the Crusaders’ record to 2-1. Lemire picked up the win for Stonehill going six innings allowing five hits and two runs. Holy Cross roughed up reliever Billy Lynch in the top of the seventh for two runs and three hits, but fell well short in their comeback attempt.

Corey Czajka capped off a perfect day at the plate, again going 2-for-2 in the nightcap. With his perfect day, Czajka raised his average to a very strong .390 on the season.

Crusader starter Ben Deane took the loss going four and 1/3 innings allowing nine hits and five earned runs. Despite the rough outing, Deane did show signs of promise as he fanned five Chieftains. The Crusaders will need Deane to come back strong when Patriot League play starts, as he is an important member of the starting staff.

On Tuesday a home game was scheduled versus the University of Rhode Island, but Monday night’s snow storm blankets Fitton Field with two inches of snow forcing a cancellation. The annual game against Boston College that was scheduled for Wednesday was also affected by the snowfall. The game has been moved to Thursday in hopes that an extra day will be enough time to help dry off the field. Scheduled to be played in Chestnut Hill, the game may be moved to another site, as was the case with the Stonehill game to allow the game to be played.

The crazy New England weather has been a challenge awaiting the Crusaders this weekend. However, on the schedule to give the Crusaders valuable experience heading into Patriot League play.

BY JIM MALONEY
CRUSADER SPORTS STAFF

 Baseball still looking for a dry home

BY JIM MALONEY
CRUSADER SPORTS STAFF

The NCAA tournament provides us with a chance to watch all of these things like Hampton knock off an Iowa State, but we love it anyway. Maybe someday we’ll even see a 16-seed knock off a number one. And nothing beats our favorite team winning it all, but there is a lot to be said about the sight of a superstar player getting through an injury or staring adversity in the face and not backing down. Then responding by putting his team on his own back and carrying them all the way to the nation championship (a la Danny Manning with Kansas on his back in 1988).

People still talk about the time when North Carolina State ended UCLA’s seven-year reign with a double-overtime victory in the national semifinals in 1974. People still talk about when Magic met Bird for the first time with the 1979 championship on the line. Imagines of some skinny freshman, I think they called him Michael Jordan, sinking a 17-foot-jump shot from the corner, which turned into the title-clinching basket for North Carolina, still flash through people’s minds after almost twenty years.

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Even I have some memories of Villanova’s title run in 1985. Remember Keith Smart’s shot which won it for Indiana in 1987? How about Duke’s upset of undefeated defending national champion UNLV in 1991? And remember Chris Webber’s timeout call two years later? He was the Bill Buckner of college baseball.

It is the drama, the suspense, the heroism, and the emotion that makes the NCAA tournament arguably the greatest sporting event in the country. We love watching David beat Goliath, so we turn on our television every March and wait to see one (or two or three) of those underdogs come through to entertain us. It shouldn’t come as a surprise anymore for us to see someone like Hampton knock off an Iowa State, but we love it anyway. Maybe someday we’ll even see a 16-seed knock off a number one.

And nothing beats our favorite team winning it all, but there is a lot to be said about the sight of a superstar player getting through an injury or staring adversity in the face and not backing down. Then responding by putting his team on his own back and carrying them all the way to the nation championship (a la Danny Manning with Kansas on his back in 1988).

The NCAA tournament provides us with a chance to watch all of these things on an annual basis and we devour it like we were Eve in an apple orchard. Don’t believe me? Just check out the television rankings. The latest version just adds to the legend of the tourney. And we wouldn’t want things any other way (well we’d kind of like to see the Crusaders playing Michigan State this weekend).

Ramblings . . .

* It is inevitable. It is tragic. Nomar needs surgery. If this was an injury that he fought his way through all of last year, I have to wonder why the doctors didn’t think of doing the surgery in the off-season? Nomar could have had it performed after Christmas and still have been ready to perform for us and defend his batting title by Opening Day. I am no Dr. Arthur Pappas, but I have to wonder if this could have been avoided. (note - all of NY feels your pain on the loss of “Nomore” Garciaparra, Kate - ed.)

* Wait a minute. Chuck Knoblauch can’t throw, so the Yankees move him from the infield to the outfield? Somebody needs to explain to me how that is supposed to help. Every outfielder in baseball should be offended to be put in the same category as Knoblauch.

March IS Madness

I know that it probably busted everyone’s brackets, but wasn’t it fun watching things like the near-hopeless underdog Hampton send second-seeded Iowa State home in the first round of the NCAA tournament? And wasn’t it fun watching Gonzaga pulling another few upsets this year? It’s something that we’ve gotten used to seeing over the years.

But like fine wine, it never gets old, only better. It is the reason why CBS spent over $6 billion for the broadcast rights. It is the reason people around the country call in “sick” on the day the tournament starts up. It is the reason why many Holy Cross professors showed up to teach empty classrooms a couple of weeks ago. It is the reason why everyone can’t wait to jump into the March Madness pools. We love the tournament and there is no denying that. We love it because it has produced so many memories . . .

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