REVENGE OF THE NERDS: The Computer Science Soccer Team Defeats the Stereotypes

You’ve seen the movie: Physically unfit, socially inept and intellectually gifted computer nerd struggles against the stunningly athletic, enviably popular and miserably obtuse sports jock for respect, power and romance. Based almost entirely on well-known stereotypes and formulaic narratives, it’s a familiar plotline on the big screen and small screen alike. But the College of Charleston operates off screen and, lucky for us, our characters are much more dynamic.

Chris Starr ’83, chair of the computer science department, knows this first hand. In fact, it’s what motivated him some five years ago to organize a Charleston Soccer League team for computer science majors at the College.

“The team was started to get students and faculty out to do stuff together, to get out of the classroom – out from behind the computer,” says Starr. “There’s just so much more to life.”

Things like sunlight and fresh air.

“This gives a bunch of geeky software guys a chance to get outside and into the sunshine once a week,” says Starr, adding that the team plays four seasons a year — including the winter season, when it is played indoors (primarily at the College gym) with a smaller, less bouncy ball and referred to as futsal. But even during the summer season, Starr jokes, “you can see us coming because of our pasty glow.”

Officially dubbed the Homestarz after Homestar Runner — an Internet-based cartoon popular among gamers and tech-savvy types (“It’s incredibly out there and geeky, just like us,” laughs Starr) — the team is loosely referred to as the Computer Science Soccer Team. That, however, is a bit misleading.

“It’s mostly for computer science students and alumni, but we’ve had faculty, staff, students and alumni from all over campus over the years,” says Starr. “The team represents the whole College.”

And not just in warm bodies. The Homestarz represents the supportive environment and helpful community that typifies the College.

“It builds community, and that’s what the College of Charleston is about,” says Starr. “That’s what makes us distinctive. It’s just a really cool community.”

Justin Jaques, a utilities operator in the College’s Central Energy Plant and an outsider to the computer science department, couldn’t agree more. When he was assigned to the Homestarz through a player pool last winter, he was welcomed into the team wholeheartedly.

“I’ve played with them ever since,” says Jaques. “My favorite part of the team is the people. We have a lot of fun on and off of the field.”

And fun, of course, is the main objective.

“This is about having a Sunday afternoon set aside for play,” says Starr, explaining that the Division 3 team doesn’t bother with organized practices. “We don’t win many games, but we have a lot of fun. We celebrate like we’re winners — we celebrate any goal we can make.”

So, while the Homestarz might not be ready to go up against Brazil, these computer science “nerds” have all the right stuff: active bodies, a supportive and respectful group of friends and the smarts to back it all up.

And that’s a winning combination.

Pictured above (l–r): Homestar Justin Jaques, Andrew Bergstrom and Chris Starr

TECHNO BYTES

The BATTERY Project, the College’s initiative to implement a new suite of administrative software applications, recently made significant progress when SunGard Higher Education’s Banner Unified Digital Campus system was chosen to replace the College’s outdated programs.

Banner is the world’s most widely used collegiate administrative suite. It will integrate all the College’s applications into a single environment. These applications include finance, human resources, student, advancement, portal, document imaging, workflow, data, warehouse/store and enrollment management for recruiting and admissions.

The new system will provide meaningful new support and improve operations for faculty, staff and students alike.

Barring unforeseen circumstances, the implementation phase of The BATTERY Project will begin this summer with a campuswide kick-off celebration.

For more information about BATTERY, visit cofc.edu/battery, or contact Vice President of Fiscal Services Priscilla Burbage at burbagep@cofc.edu or 953.5578.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

• Concrete pile caps and grade beams will continue to be poured at the new science center this summer and should be completed in July.

• At the Cato Center (SOTA project) this summer, scaffolding and decking will be erected and placed on the fifth floor, rebar and post-tension cables will be placed on the fourth floor, reshoring will continue on the third floor and the exterior-wall placement will continue on the first and second floors.

• At the Carolina First Center this summer, ceiling grid installation will be finished up on the arena and concourse levels and work on the presidential suite and area halo will continue.

• At Fort Johnson, the boathouse has been removed to make way for the new Grice building. Construction will begin in October.