Parker evolves throughout Elon career

Senior soccer standout makes great improvement through past four years

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Sports Editor

For most Elon seniors, their remaining months on campus are spent searching for last-minute jobs, packing up, saying goodbyes and enjoying his or her last few moments on campus. But senior soccer player Aaron Parker’s last few months on campus were a little different from most of his peers.

Parker has been playing professional soccer part time with the Wilmington Hammerheads, a Second Division team in the United Soccer Leagues. Parker made his professional debut April 25, playing 10 minutes in the game. The Hammerheads tied 2-2 in Parker’s first game.

Elon head coach Darren Powell said Parker has played in a few preseason games with the team but he will play full time after graduation.

Evolution of Parker

As a freshman in 2005, Parker was on an Elon team that went 9-9-2 overall and 4-2-1 in the Southern Conference. That season the team finished third in the league.

“I came in (as a freshman) and we had a losing season,” Parker said. “Coach Powell came in and he basically turned everything around.”

Parker played in 12 games, starting in three of them. He finished with one goal, three assists and a total of five points.

“My happiest memory of Aaron Parker is his transition from where he was as a freshman to where he is, now, as a senior,” Powell said.

In his sophomore season, Parker made improvements in all statistical categories. He played in 14 games and started in three of them. He scored two goals in 2006 and had a total of four points. He also scored a game-winning goal.

Parker once again built off his personal success for his junior year by playing in 19 games and starting in 18 of them. He finished the 2007 season with seven goals, six assists and a game-winning goal.

“In soccer terms, I don’t think he traveled (on the road with the team) his freshman year,” Powell said. “By his senior year, he was probably one of the most informed strikers in the league. That’s a big transition. His development is very big on the field and also the same off the field.”

The 2008 season, Parker’s senior campaign, proved to be the most successful for him and the Phoenix. He played in all 20 games and started all but one of them. He finished the season with 20 points, seven goals, six assists and two game-winning goals.

Parker helped lead Elon to a 10-9-1 overall record and the team went undefeated in the Southern Conference, 7-0-0. The Phoenix went on to lose in the semi-finals of the SoCon tournament against fifth-seeded College of Charleston, 4-1.

“We knew this preseason he came in with a new focus his senior year,” Powell said. “He wanted to win a championship.”

Elon’s impact on Parker

Parker will graduate with a psychology degree from Elon today. He said earning his degree is one of his biggest accomplishments.

The senior played in a few games for the Hammerheads early in the season, but will rejoin the team full time after graduation.

“I feel like it’s a family here at Elon,” Parker said. “It’s going to be hard to leave and start over with a new team. I feel like overall, though, it’s going to be pretty exciting.”

Powell said he knows that Parker is someone that he will stay in contact with.

“He’s somebody that’s very proud of the program and will remain so in years to come,” Powell said.

But Parker credits Elon for teaching him how to be himself.

“ Anything can come along and stray you away from your goals, but to stay on track and to keep fighting to get your goals is the main thing that I learned at Elon,” Parker said.