

# Sports

A look at Vanderbilt athletics

## International Influence

*Multilingual Liebelei Lawrence expands her horizons at Vanderbilt.*

By GREG ROBERTS

**B**ONJOUR. GUTEN TAG. MOÏEN. Γεια σου. It doesn't really matter how you say hello to Liebelei Lawrence—she's equally at home speaking any of those languages. But the most remarkable thing about this Vanderbilt sophomore isn't that she's fluent in five languages (Greek, French, German, Luxembourgish and English); it's that she is a varsity athlete who is fluent in five languages.

"When we go to golf tournaments," teammate and roommate Helen Richards says, "you run into a lot of players from different countries, and she can always speak to them. It's really funny to see how she can go up and have a conversation with them. Knowing those five languages, there aren't very many people she can't talk to."

Born in Greece, Lawrence moved to Luxembourg at the age of 3 when her father, a pilot, was assigned there. There she lived until moving to Florida at the age of 16 to pursue a career in golf. With a Greek mother and Luxembourg's blend of French and German culture, Lawrence says she acquired her repertoire of languages almost by default.

"It wasn't really my choice," she says. "I picked up Greek from my mom. That was my first language. When we moved to Luxembourg and I was around my dad the whole time, I picked up English because that's all he speaks. Luxembourgish isn't an official language. It's a spoken language, but it doesn't have actual grammar. Elementary school in Luxembourg is in German, and then

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**Liebelei Lawrence moved from Greece to Florida at the age of 16 to pursue a career in golf.**



## {Where Are They Now?}

Twenty-three years after leading the Commodores past the Volunteers in a 28–21 home victory, former quarterback **Whit Taylor**, BS'83, is still stalking the sidelines. For the past nine years, he's been the head football coach and physical education teacher for the Shelbyville (Tenn.) Central High School Eagles. He and his wife, Darlene, whom he married during his senior year at Vanderbilt, have two sons, Matthew, a student at Middle Tennessee State University, and Michael, a junior at Central High. And 23 years after that 1982 milestone, Whit and his younger son were at Neyland Stadium in Knoxville to witness the Commodores' 28–24 road win. "I'm tickled to death for the group that did it," he says. "After that many years, it's time to pass it on. I know that it was a neat feeling for our senior class when we went out that way. Now we have two more goals—a winning season and a bowl game."



## Vanderbilt 28, Tennessee 24

"OK, you can breathe now." That was the initial reaction by many Vanderbilt faithful Nov. 19 as they watched senior linebacker Moses Osemwegie intercept a goal-line pass to stop Tennessee's last-gasp desperation drive to win the game as the last second ticked off the clock. The next reaction was pure celebra-

tion. Vanderbilt's 28–24 win over the University of Tennessee was a long time coming; it had been 23 years since the Commodores' last victory over the Vols—and 30 years since the last victory in Knoxville.

The win was the finishing touch to a 5–6 football season that garnered regional and national recognition for several Commodores. Senior quarterback Jay Cutler was voted the Southeastern Conference Offensive Player of the Year by the league coaches and the Associated Press. The all-time leader in virtually every Vanderbilt passing category, he also was named first-team All-SEC quarterback. Joining Cutler

**Quarterback Jay Cutler was named SEC Offensive Player of the Week after throwing for 315 yards and three touchdowns against the Vols.**



MIKE STRASINGER/THE CITY PAPER

as a first-team All-SEC pick was Osemwegie, the SEC's active career leader in tackles, and freshman receiver Earl Bennett, who set an SEC freshman record with 79 receptions and was named a second-team All-America pick by Rivals.com. Senior tight end Dustin Dunning and junior offensive tackle Brian Stamper were named to the All-SEC second team. Bennett, safety Reshard Langford and kicking specialist Bryant Hahnfeldt were named to the SEC All-Freshman Team.

## Kraus Named All-Region in Final Year of Men's Soccer Varsity Play

Senior forward John Krause was named to the All-Midwest Region first team by the National Collegiate Soccer Coaches Association in December. He led the team in scoring with 12 goals and two assists and was a first-team All-Missouri Valley pick. He also was named to the MVC All-Tournament team as the Commodores reached the conference semifinals and a school-record third-place finish during the regular season.

Vanderbilt will not sponsor men's soccer as a scholarship varsity sport beyond June 30, 2006. The university will, however, maintain a club team through the Student Recreation Center. The current scholarship commitments for the players will be honored until the recipients graduate.

## Women's Swimming Joins Varsity Lineup

Women's swimming has been added as a Vanderbilt varsity sport, beginning in the 2006–2007 academic year, following an internal periodic review of the athletics program. "Swimming is a good fit for Vanderbilt," says David Williams, vice chancellor for student life and university affairs. "It should be a sport in which we can naturally become very competitive, and we are pleased to show our commitment to the Southeastern Conference by adding one of its marquee programs, which will only make the league stronger."

The university will begin searching for a swimming coach after the current NCAA season is completed, and discussions are currently under way with Metro-Nashville officials to make nearby Centennial Sportsplex the Commodores' home pool.

# Sports Roundup

## Baseball: Corbin to Coach 2006 National Team

Commodores baseball coach Tim Corbin was chosen by USA Baseball to serve as head coach of the 2006 USA Baseball National Team, representing the United States in the FISU World University Championship this summer. This is Corbin's second stint with USA Baseball (the national governing body of amateur baseball in the United States), but his first as head coach, having served as an assistant on the 2000 team. "To represent the USA in any capacity is certainly an honor," Corbin says, "and to represent this country in baseball is an extreme privilege and one for which I am very grateful." In addition, Thomas Samuel, Vanderbilt's baseball media relations liaison, was named the team press officer. Team USA will travel to Durham, N.C., and Cuba in search of its second consecutive championship.



Corbin

## Women's Soccer: Players, Coach Win Honors

Goalkeeper Tyler Griffin and defender Kim Perkins, both juniors, were named to *Soccer Buzz* magazine's 2005 Central All-Regional Team, and Coach Ronnie Hill was named Central Region Coach of the Year. Griffin also was named an NSCAA All-American and SEC Defensive Player of the Year. The team finished 2005 with a 16-3-3 record and received its first invitation to the NCAA Tournament since 1998.



Griffin

## Men's Golf: List Wins New Year's Invitational

Junior Luke List carded a four-round total of 7-under-par to win the 80th New Year's Invitational at the St. Petersburg (Fla.) Country Club in January. With the win, the 2004 U.S. Amateur runner-up moved into 14th place in the *Golfweek*/Titleist men's amateur rankings. "This is one of the premier winter events in amateur golf," notes Coach Press McPhaul.



## Bowling: Fledgling Team Joins Varsity Lineup

The women's bowling team ended the fall portion of its schedule on a roll after finishing in third place at the Eastern Shore Hawk Classic in Millsboro, Del. In its second year as a Vanderbilt varsity sport, the team is coached by John Williamson, who previously served as Vanderbilt's director of baseball operations. Bowling became Vanderbilt's 16th varsity program in 2004, added to meet newly implemented NCAA Division I-A membership requirements.

## Women's Golf: Vandy Lends a Hand

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Vanderbilt picked up the tab for food and hotel costs for the Tulane University women's golf team at Vanderbilt's Mason Rudolph Championship last September. It was the first golf event in which the Tulane women had competed since the storm roared through New Orleans, Tulane's home.

## Batsman Tim Boyd, umpire Nirav Vora, and wicket keeper Srivatsan Pallavaram react to a throw from fielder Saikat Sengupta during cricket practice.



PHOTOS BY NEIL BRAKE

Jones, Verlin Cassill and Benedict Kiely. Some poets who read at Vanderbilt were Richard Wilbur, Richard Eberhart, W.H. Auden, Louis Coxe, Louis Simpson, Donald Justice, Paul Engle, William Stafford, William Jay Smith, Robert Hollander, and those stalwarts from the Fugitive days, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate and Robert Penn Warren.

In spite of legendary toppers such as Dylan Thomas and madmen like Cal Lowell, in my limited experience as a literary impresario I found that, in general, poets, while not abstemious, behaved more prudently than novelists. Allen Tate was an exception. He drank too much and chased too many women and married too many times, but his fellow Fugitives, Mr. Ransom and Red Warren, lived careful lives, husbanding their energy as if, wherever they were and whatever they were doing, a part of their minds was always at work on the poem or novel or essay they were writing. For most of the years that I knew him, Mr. Davidson did not drink at all. His life after the Fugitive movement had been different from those of his colleagues—more difficult, as he saw it, and he seemed to want to separate himself from the loose behavior of other writers, from any suggestion of bohemian excess.

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halfway through high school you switch to French.”

Lawrence isn't content with knowing five languages and is working on her sixth, Spanish. It seems that for Lawrence, speaking several forms of vernacular is second nature. But for those around her, as Richards expressed before, there is something both entertaining and captivating about watching her linguistic fluidity in action.

“I have no idea what she's saying when she talks to her mom,” says Coach Martha Freitag. “She might as well be speaking Japanese, but it's fun to see how easily she jumps between languages. It's fascinating. I can only speak very little Spanish—maybe enough to ask for directions—so to watch her jump between languages shows what a great talent she has.”

Of course, it wasn't her talent with languages that persuaded Freitag to recruit Lawrence. While attending the prestigious

Some writers visited us for entire semesters, but these did not come on Mrs. Vanderbilt's money; they were supported by outside foundations such as the American Council of Learned Societies, or they substituted for Vanderbilt professors who were on leave and were paid out of the department budget.

Over the years our long-term visitors came from various parts of the world, and most of them spoke English fluently. In one spectacular case we were joined for a semester by a Japanese novelist who, we were told, was “the Robert Penn Warren of Japan.” He appeared to be capable of speaking only two English sentences. “Do you know Allen Tate?” he would ask, and when you said that you did, he would smile amiably and say, “Thank you very much.”

His wife knew English quite well, but she would not admit that she knew it when he was close by. She would not translate for him. She would not take messages over the phone. At parties, when he was at one end of the room and she was at the other, she would chat easily, but when he approached, suddenly, with a straight face she would say that she did not speak English. This was trying, but, once, her refusal to translate for her husband brought what some of us considered

just retribution. They were at our house. To go with her food, [my wife] Jane had put out some mild mustard and some that was extremely hot. Our visitor chose the hot and began to pile it on his ham and biscuit.

“Please,” Jane said to his wife, “he is welcome to all he wants of anything, but that mustard is very hot. Please tell him. He will burn himself.”

His wife, giving Jane an innocent smile, said, “No speak.”

The Robert Penn Warren of Japan took a large bite. His eyes filled with tears. His face turned a deep red. He began to gasp. Jane gave him water, which did not immediately cool the fire. Our guest gasped again and coughed and wheezed. No one could help him. We watched while he suffered. But nothing changed. His pain wasn't sufficiently severe for him to allow his wife to translate for him.

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David Leadbetter Golf Academy in Bradenton, Fla., Lawrence caught the eye of Vanderbilt's coaches with her impressive performances at various national tournaments. After narrowing her school choices down to Vandy and Texas, the decision became clear after talking to Coach Freitag and paying a campus visit.

“It just seemed perfect—the academics, the school itself, the coach—and the team was doing really well that year. It was a no-brainer,” Lawrence says.

Disappointed with her performance as a freshman, Lawrence worked hard over the summer and, in the fall, twice bested her career low from last season with scores of 70 and 68. She also earned her first top-10 finish in the team's opening match at the Cougar Classic in Charleston, S.C.

“This year we're seeing the kind of golf we knew she was capable of,” Freitag says. “I feel like she's just going to get more and more consistent every day.”

Even as Lawrence develops her game, Vanderbilt has changed her perspective on what she wants to achieve in life. When she came to the U.S., Lawrence was intent on pursuing a career in professional golf and had never experienced anything outside of the very golf-centric atmosphere of the academy in Florida. But during these last two years, Lawrence has come to realize that she has opportunities open to her that extend far beyond the realm of golf.

“Before I came here, I was never around so many intellectual people who are interested in so many different things,” she says. “Vanderbilt has given me insights about the entire world and what I might be able to do.”

Majoring in communication studies, Lawrence now knows that if a career in golf does not work out, her language skills can take her places she never dreamed of before.

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