



Krikorian Transforms USMMA With A Turnaround Season

Under first-year head coach **John Krikorian**, the United States Merchant Marine Academy men's basketball team proved that their last year in the Skyline Conference would be one to remember.

Taking on a 10-16 team, with just one returning starter, Krikorian returned to the USMMA, where he worked as an assistant to former head coach Billy Lange, current head coach of the Navy Midshipmen, and transformed the Mariners with a "Tough and Together" mentality.

In the first year of **The Krikorian Era**, Merchant Marine advanced into a winning team, adding four more wins, increasing their record to 14-12, 9-7 in the Skyline Conference to finish sixth in the league, two places above last year's eight place finish. Krikorian's Mariners also added four more conference wins to 2005-06's 5-9 Skyline record. Merchant Marine boasted a 10-4 record at home in historical Liebertz Gymnasium, after going 7-5 the prior year.

The Mariners started the season strong, going 5-2 before the holiday break. The Mariners up-tempo offense was showcased in an early season Skyline victory over conference foe, Old Westbury at Kings Point, defeating the Panthers 96-91.

Later in the season, USMMA defeated the Panthers a second time, 71-67, going 2-0 against the conference tournament's runner up.

In January, the Mariners entered the depth of their conference schedule, displaying tremendous endurance and strength in second half play. On Jan. 10, Merchant Marine overcame a 12-point deficit to defeat Manhattanville 70-68 at home. Four Mariners scored in double digits in the win. On Alumni Day, the Mariners held their own against the eventual Sweet 16 competitor, Stevens Tech. Merchant Marine chipped away at the Ducks' 21-point second half lead to come within four with four minutes to go. With a running buzzer-beater from the top of the key, the Mariners defeated Centenary College for their sixth conference win of the season, 68-66. Centenary led by as much as 18 in the second half. Against the NCAA's leading scorer and 2007 Skyline Player of the Year, Mike Hoyt from Mount Saint Mary, the Merchant Marine defense thrived, holding Hoyt to just 12 points, when he was averaging 33.7 points per game at the time.

By the Numbers

Merchant Marine improved in every offensive category, increasing their field goal percentage by .029 by making 68 more buckets in 72 additional attempts and improving their three-point percentage by .045.

From the line, the Mariners boasted a .709 percentage up .061 points from 2005-06.

The Mariners also increased their average points per game by 12 percent, from 67.8 to 75.9, scoring an additional 211 points.

In the Skyline, the Mariners were ranked in the Top 4 in six different categories. Merchant Marine led the league in three-point field goals made with 265, an average of 10.19 per game. The Mariners were second in assists (17.15/game) and third in their assists to turnover ratio (1.08). The Academy was ranked fourth in three categories, free throw percentage (.709), three-point field goal percentage (.366) and three-point field goal percentage defense.

Mariners Rank Among Best In The Skyline

All-Conference Honorable Mention Senior **Brian Kelly**

- 7th in points
- 8th in field goal percentage
- 9th in rebounding
- 14th in 3-pt field goal percentage
- 15th in 3-pt. field goals
- 15th in defensive rebounds

Rookie of the Year, Freshman **Ryan Samuel**

- 1st in free throw percentage
- 9th in assist/turnover ratio
- 14th in steals

Sophomore **Pat Grace**

- 2nd in free throw percentage
- 4th in 3-pt. field goals made
- 6th in 3-pt. field goal percentage
- 14th in assists
- 17th in scoring

Sophomore **Matt Oaks**

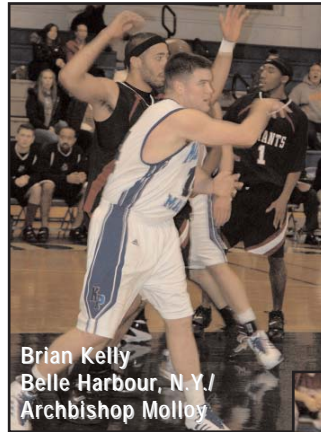
- 12th in 3-pt. field goals
- 13th in 3-pt. field goal percentage

Freshman **Chad Ray**

- 1st in 3-pt. field goal percentage

Senior **Steve McDade**

- 8th in assist/turnover ratio



Brian Kelly
Belle Harbour, N.Y./
Archbishop Molloy



Steve McDade
Bellmore, N.Y./Kellenberg



Jon Fassnacht
York, Pa./Red Lion

Mariners Class of 2007

*Brian Kelly, Steve McDade,
Jon Fassnacht*

Mariners Shine In 2007

Archbishop Molloy's Ace

Highlighting the Mariners' year of success was senior captain **Brian Kelly**, who stepped up to the task and led the team in scoring in 16 contests, scoring over 20 points on seven occasions and topping his personal best point total five times, ending the season with 449 points with a career high of 28 points against Hood College (Dec. 30) and six season double-doubles.

Kelly, a Belle Harbour native and Archbishop Molloy alum, flourished in his senior year, doubling his point total from last season and almost matching his career total to date. Kelly just missed tripling his career average points per game with 17.3 this season and fell short of the 1,000 point club by just 59 points. The Skyline Conference Honorable Mention selection led the Mariners in scoring and rebounds with a total of 171 rebounds. As Merchant Marine's representative to the NJAC vs. Skyline Senior game, Kelly earned Skyline MVP honors as an all-star starter with 22 points and six rebounds.

Super Seniors Lead The Way

Seniors **Steve McDade** and **Jon Fassnacht** also saw their skills and abilities thrive under the new era of Merchant Marine basketball. McDade, another New York native, improved from 44 assists last season to 76 this season. The Kellenberg alum bettered his scoring effort by 54 points from last season, making 06-07 his largest improvement. McDade finished his career with 419 points. The senior guard had a career high with 21 against Mount Saint Mary, leading the team in scoring as the Mariners defeated the Blue Knights, 92-83.

Fassnacht, a York, Pa., native saw an increase in floor time and took 57 more shots, doubling his former career scoring average with 114 points on the season. Fassnacht scored a career high of 16 points in his first time out as a Mariner senior.

Sophomore Guards Make Waves In Their Second Season

The seniors' leadership was echoed in the performance of their underclassmen with sophomore guard **Pat Grace** turning his freshman seasons' 89 point total to 346 points, finishing the season as the team's second best scorer. The Cardinal Gibbons alum played in all 26 games and averaged .431 from the floor and .428 from the three-point arc. Grace started in 21 contests and averaged 13.3 points per game as the team's leading scorer on five occasions with a



Sophomore Pat Grace from Ellicott City, Md., steps up his game in his sophomore season as a Mariner.



Matt Oaks rolls one in for the Mariners.

career high of 24 points against Stevens (Feb. 15). With 83 three-pointers, Grace also broke the single season three-point record previously held by Kevin Bernick in 2000-01 with 81.

Sophomore **Matt Oaks** found a significant role in the Mariners' *Tough and Together* offense, starting nine of 25 games played. Oaks tallied double-digit scoring on eight occasions including leading the team in points twice during the season. The North Carolina native marked a career high 23 points against the conference leader Stevens Tech. Oaks' scoring average jumped 7.1 points as he shot .424 from the floor, .359 from three and .727 from the free throw line.



TOUGH AND TOGETHER
 2006-07 U.S. Merchant Marine Academy
 Men's Basketball Team

The Class of 2010

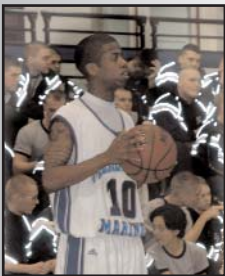
Samuel, Rookie of the Year

The new crop of rookies also made their mark as freshman **Ryan Samuel** from Cedar Hill, Texas, made an immediate impact on the team setting him up to earn *Skyline Rookie of the Year* honors. As the Mariners' starting point guard, Samuel averaged over 10 points and four assists per game. In his first year of college ball, Samuel averaged 28.9 minutes on the floor. He led the Mariners and the conference in free throw percentage with .871, breaking the Academy's season record set by Larry Jordan in 1985-86 with .844. Samuel scored in the double digits on 12 occasions, scoring a season high of 20 points against Yeshiva (Jan. 24) and Centenary College (Jan. 30).

Rattigan held Kenny Eusey, A First-Team All-Conference player, to zero points, as he went 0-for-8 from the floor and 0-for-4 from three.

On Feb. 10, the Cardinal Mooney alum held the Skyline Conference's Player of the Year, Mike Hoyt, to just 12 points, as he only got off three shots from the three-point arc where he was dangerous all year, leading the conference in three-pointers with 121.

Chjrapin rounded out the remaining rookies as he saw time in 17 contests with a season best game against Maritime (Feb. 5) with six points and five rebounds.



RYAN SAMUEL
 Cedar Hill, Texas

*2007 SKYLINE
 CONFERENCE
 ROOKIE OF THE YEAR*

Fellow members of the Class of 2010, **Max Paul** from Sag Harbor, N.Y., **Chad Ray** from Carrollton, Texas, **Scott Rattigan** from Sarasota, Fl., and **Jeff Chjrapin** from Clarksville, S.C., helped add to the Mariners' increased average of points per game, making the Class of 2010 the most successful to date. Together the rookies combined for 545 points and 181 rebounds. Collectively, the freshman class played in almost all games, barring injury.

Max Paul earned a starting position in 19 of 26 games, and was second in the team behind Kelly in rebounds (131). The center from Pierson H.S. averaged six points per game while shooting .578 from the floor. Paul dropped a season best and career-first double-double in the last regular season game against St. Joseph's (Feb. 17) with 16 points and 14 rebounds. The Sag Harbor native scored in double digits in five contests.



Chad Ray goes up for the three.

Ray started the season slow but helped the Mariners to important late season victories as he quickly paced his way to 122 points. **Chad Ray** ended the season as the conference leader in three-point field goal percentage (.475).

Ray came into his own during a mid-season stretch in January as he scored in double digits five times, with a career best effort at Mount Saint Mary College (Jan. 20) with 16 points. Against the Blue Knights, the Texas guard went 3-for-4 from the three-point line and 3-for-3 from the charity stripe.

On defense, rookie **Scott Rattigan's** talents shined through as he contained some of the conference's leading scorers. On Old Westbury's home court,

THE KRIKORIAN ERA

Head Coach John Krikorian,
 Asst. Coach Danny Silver and Asst. Coach Pete Schwethelm



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