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MY VIEW

Bulls' success provides needed rallying point

Updated: 12/29/08 6:57 AM

On Dec. 5, surrounded by hundreds of other cheering Bulls fans at Detroit's Ford Field, I had the unforgettable sensation of feeling history in the making as our football team claimed its first Division I conference title. The University at Buffalo is still celebrating that thrilling victory, and we hope Bulls fans will join us as our new Mid-American Conference champions head to the International Bowl in Toronto on Saturday.

This achievement is all the sweeter because it comes as we commemorate the 50th anniversary of one of the proudest moments in UB history, when our 1958 team turned down our only other bowl bid in protest of discrimination against the African-American members on that team.

In a year that has brought significant challenges for our university, the hard-earned success our Bulls have achieved has provided a much-needed rallying point.

In bringing home the MAC championship, the Bulls brought a tremendous amount of pride and spirit home to our university and our community, while focusing considerable national attention on UB and on the region.

The victory and pride the Bulls claimed this year have not simply been the work of one season, however. This success represents the cumulative impact of years of hard work, vision, teamwork and commitment on the part of our players, coaches and Bulls supporters everywhere. And of course, much of the credit belongs to Athletic Director Warde Manuel and Head Coach Turner Gill, 2007 MAC Coach of the Year. In just three seasons, Gill has achieved a dramatic transition, restoring the program to national prominence.

The values Gill and his players have modeled mean all the more because they embody a number of core values that define our larger university. The qualities that earned our Bulls a championship title are those that will lead UB to realize the vision we are pursuing through UB 2020 — a vision of our future as one of the nation's leading public research universities.

We will succeed because we employ those same values that Gill has championed so successfully these past three years. A vision for greatness and a bold strategy for achieving it; a keen awareness of the big picture and the knowledge that success is the result not of a moment's great play but of long-term commitment; and a culture that rewards teamwork — all these are critical elements to competing successfully, on the playing field and in the

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Gill's players do not wear their names on the back of their jerseys, underscoring that they are a team, not an assortment of individuals. Likewise, UB faculty, staff and students share an unwritten understanding that this is our university, and we are all in this together. In turn, we at UB see ourselves as part of a larger team — the Western New York team, whose success depends on our partnership.

Like Gill's Bulls, our team strives for nothing less than excellence, and while we are proud of what we have achieved, we have no intention of stopping here. We share a vision for our greatness, we have a strategic game plan for achieving it and we are taking the long view of our success, undeterred by temporary setbacks.

Heartfelt thanks to Gill, his staff and our inspiring Bulls for a season to remember — and for reminding us of what we can achieve together with vision, hard work and teamwork. Here's to an even more successful year ahead.

Douglas Turner is on vacation.

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