FOUR FOR FOUR
The Irish seniors head to their fourth College Cup in four years.
Underclassmen carry Irish through rough start

By ALEX BARKER
Sports Writer

Entering the season, all signs pointed towards another Notre Dame run at an NCAA Championship. Sure it didn’t help to lose one of most talented senior classes in program history, but as is true of all great programs, there would be no rebuilding, just reloading. The third-ranked Irish not only boasted a strong senior class, who could not have come closer to a title in its previous trips only to be denied in three College Cup appearances, but also a collection of talented underclassmen ready to step into starring roles, whatever they may be.

“At the beginning of the season, you are still trying people at different positions using different rotations,” junior forward Rose Augustin said.

While still trying to find the right lineup as injuries depleted the team, top-ranked North Carolina came to town. The Irish had high expectations heading into the rematch of last season’s College Cup final, a 2-1 Tar Heel victory, hoping to christen the brand new Alumni Stadium with an opening night victory.

However, an energetic crowd of 3,000-plus fans weren’t enough to will the Irish to a win as the Tar Heels dominated early of 3,000-plus fans weren’t.

“I’m definitely excited [to be healthier] this year,” she said. “Last season I never really knew how much I could give on the field. Now I know I can give 100 percent and still have energy to go into overtime and actually be able to help my team.”

While Fowlkes and Henderson have had outstanding seasons in their own right, they have junior midfielder Rose Augustin to thank for many of their offensive opportunities. Augustin, in her second season as a regular starter, leads the team with 10 assists and has seven goals of her own.

“(Augustin) has been one of our most consistent players all year,” Waldrum said “I think she’s having an All-American type year. I think she’s made great improvements in her defense and she’s really become a leader for us on the field.”

Augustin’s emergence became possible when last year’s talented class graduated, creating an opening that Augustin has filled ably.

“Rose has definitely come into her own this season,” senior defender Rachel VanderGenugten said. “Last year she had a lot of other people ahead of her in that position.”

VanderGenugten said necessity spurred the younger players into bigger roles. After Notre Dame’s leading scorer last year, Kerri Hanks, graduated, someone had to pick up the offensive slack. Fowlkes and Henderson have certainly done such. Similarly, Augustin’s leadership was needed in the front line.

“This year it had to be [Rose],” VanderGenugten said. “If Rose didn’t step up, I’m not sure if we would have had an upperclassman [leading] up there at all.”

Another change came in the Irish net. Senior Kelsey Lysander, who started every game last year, compiling a 26-1-0 record, began the season splitting time with junior Nikki Weiss before Weiss eventually took over for good.

With all the changes this Irish team has undergone, they find themselves in a familiar position, even familiar to the younger players on the team.

“It’s good to have [those previous tournaments] under your belt and to experience something like that,” Henderson said. “Coming into next year, you are used to it and more prepared.”

The Irish have indeed become used to the NCAA Tournament, as the bar has been raised as a high level.

“There is just an expectation to be there [at the NCAA Tournament] every year,” Fowlkes said. “Just having those goals really helps you focus throughout the season. After changes throughout the lineup, Fowlkes, Henderson and Augustin have found themselves in positions where their focus could lead the Irish beyond expectations, to a College Cup title.

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Sophomore Melissa Henderson has emerged as an offensive stalwart for Notre Dame, leading the Irish with 16 goals and 41 points. She also has five assists on the season.

“[I’m willing to do] whatever is needed for the team and coach thought that it was a good fit. I was excited about it and it just kind of worked out,” Fowlkes said.

Possibly the biggest beneficiary of Fowlkes’ transition has been sophomore forward Melissa Henderson. Henderson has really come on in the NCAA tournament, scoring seven goals in four contests, bringing her season total to 18 tallies and five assists.

“It’s awesome having [Fowlkes] up there,” Henderson said. “All of our forwards are tremendous. But she has been doing really well, to come in there and score the goals that she has and setting up the plays that she has.”

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Juniors Lauren Fowlkes, left, and Rose Augustin, right, have adapted to expanded roles this season. Fowlkes began the season as a midfielder, but after Notre Dame struggled in the beginning of the season, moved forward and led the team with 76 shots.

Underclassmen carry Irish through rough start

Henderson, Fowlkes and Augustin fill in for injured seniors with goals, assists and leadership
Seven seniors seek one title

Headed to their fourth College Cup, Irish seniors are seeking an elusive Championship

By DOUGLAS FARMER
Sports Writer

Four College Cups. Two national-runner up finishes. Four Big East divisional titles. Three Big East Tournament titles. Ninety-one wins against only ten losses.

It is safe to say that Micaela Alvarez, Andrea Clark, Haley Ford, Kellie Lysander, Courtney Rosen, Rachel VanderGenugten and Michele Weissenhofer, the seven seniors in this year’s senior class, have accomplished a lot in the past four years. They would say they have not accomplished enough.

I came in wanting to win a National Championship and play competitively for a successful team,” forward and captain Weissenhofer said. “We have definitely surpassed my expectations for a successful team, and we may have many accomplishments including four College Cups, but I still haven’t received a national championship yet.

The Irish have indeed gone oh-for-three in the College Cup, and each loss in the final weekend of the season stung more than the previous one. In their freshman year, 2006, Notre Dame lost to, of all teams, North Carolina 2-1. Two years later the same thing happened, a 2-1 loss to the Tar Heels after North Carolina scored a goal with only two minutes left in the game.

I would say our approach against North Carolina freshman year was that we had them on this pedestal that they were this unbelievable opponent and rival that we couldn’t beat.”

“Especially after last year’s loss, we can think of so many different things we just said our backs in the door and cried because we lost,” VanderGenugten said. “It was such a bonding experience to go through something like that.”

The three dramatic losses have not been the only thing to bring the seven closer.

“We have relationships that I can’t even describe, to be able to play on the field as a competitor, be a teammate, and also be a roommate. There are so many facets of our relationship that I believe we have developed through soccer that go into various areas of our lives,” defender Clark said.

“We have learned so much through both the successes and even more through the defeats. You learn more after you lose and have a chance to look back at it.”

Even if all three previous Cup appearances ended in loss, the pure feat of reaching four Cups consecutively surpasses any expectations anyone had for the team’s seven seniors Irish coach Randy Waldrum said.

“It is such a difficult thing to get to a College Cup, yet alone four of them,” he said. “I don’t think I could honestly sit here and tell you that I would have expected this group to get to four. You hope that you have a group that could win a national championship along the way, but I think they have certainly exceeded any expectations that you realistically had when you started out.”

In getting to the four Cups, and falling short in the first three, the seven seniors went through experiences that few others can fathom.

“We have a lot to celebrate,” Rosen said. “But we are tired of someone else ending our season, and are tired of ending the season crying.”

“We have a job to do,” she said. “Let’s get it done.”

In the end though, the seniors’ long list of accomplishments to date cannot be overlooked, no matter how badly they want to add two wins to the list this weekend.

“We have a lot to celebrate and we have had a great four-year run,” Rosen said. “But we are tired of someone else winning the final big kahuna.”

I came when Waldrum subbed Alvarez onto the field. Alvarez had torn her ACL that week in practice, and doctors had ruled her out of any competition for the rest of the season, so Waldrum’s move was quite surprising.

“Waldrum sprung it on me on the sideline as we were sitting there,” she said. “Just to put on the jersey one more time and to be able to step out there was really an unbelievable experience. It was emotional, but it was something I’m always going to cherish having that memory.”

The kind gesture did not only reward Alvarez, but her teammates, friends rather, got some great blackmail out of the moment.

Some quality dance moves were caught on tape,” said Rosen, unable to control her laughter.

In the long run, the seven seniors will remember moments like Alvarez’s moment, or VanderGenugten’s first two career goals in the first two rounds of these playoffs, more vividly than any College Cup heartbreaks, but in the short term, they all have one common thought.

“I would say our approach continues this year. We’ve been down late in the half, and we come back and get the win. That’s a huge difference.”

The past four years haven’t only been about fighting back from deficits or defeats though. As made evident by their bounty of wins and trophies, these seniors have had more good times than most college athletes come to know. One of the highlights of their four years was Senior Day on Oct. 25. The highlight of the day came when Waldrum subbed
Familiar foe awaits Irish in College Cup Semis

By MIKE GOTTIMER
Sports Writer

For the second straight year, and the third time in four years, Notre Dame and North Carolina will meet again in the College Cup.

In women’s college soccer, No. 5 Notre Dame (21-3-1) and No. 4 North Carolina (21-3-1) have formed an perms rivalry for more than a decade. The last 15 years, I think when you think of women’s college soccer, I think Notre Dame (and North Carolina) would probably have to come to mind as that biggest and most storied rivalry, Irish coach Randy Waldrum said. “Over time that Notre Dame-Carolina rivalry has become one of the best in the country, and I know that when we go there to play, it’s always a packed house because that’s the game that everybody wants to see, and I think everybody around the country is always waiting to see what the score is the next morning when the game is over.”

Coming into this season, Notre Dame and North Carolina faced questions early about their ability to defeat their rivals. They have formed the premier rivalry in the country is always packed house because that’s the case. “What will be different is I think they’re going to have to respect the fact that we are a different team than what they saw when they came to our place in September,” he continued. “What you hope for is that they don’t expect the same team and they don’t take it seriously enough, and they remember the last time they were in midfield and they want to keep it to a little bit of an edge if that’s the case.”

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Irish recover from three losses with 19-game unbeaten streak

By DOUGLAS FARMER
Sports Writer

Notre Dame used another golden goal, provided by sophomore defender Jessica Schuennelier in the 92nd minute, to knock off South Florida, 1-0, in the final of the Big East Tournament on Nov. 6. On Sept. 18, the Irish used Golden Goal number one against DePaul to win 1-0. The streak start- ed with a 4-0 victory over DePaul on Sept. 18, and included two golden goal victories. The streak ended with a 1-0 loss to South Florida.

The Irish topped West Virginia in overtime with a golden goal from junior forward Taylor Knaack. The conference victory broke the Division I record for consec- utive unbeaten games in conference play, previously held by North Carolina at 55 games. The Irish record has now been extended to 66 games.

The Irish have made a few adjustments and now they expect a better result than the 6-0 win and are expecting to do what’s coming to them.”

Amanda Clark said. “We are a spark for the Irish offense during their postseason run. They have a lot of potential, and they can do a lot of things when they’re at their best.”

Waldrum said. “It’s our time to beat them when it counts.” Clark said. “They won in the beginning here, but we are ready to take that national championship.”

After their three disappoint- ing early season losses, the Irish have been one of the hottest teams in the nation, rattling off a 19-game unbeaten streak in which they have trailed for just 16:38. “They beat us in the begin- ning of the season when we were a different team. We have changed and developed this season,” senior forward Lauren Weiss said. “It’s a different team, they don’t know what’s coming to them.”

The streak has given not only Clark, but the rest of the Irish team confidence, and not only do they expect a better result than the 6-0 loss to South Florida in September, but also, a win against their rivals.

“We made a few moves, and (moving Fowlkes) was probably one of the changes that propelled them to their current unbeaten streak. For starters, junior goalie Nikki Weiss took over the goalkeeper duties from senior Kelsey Lyssander and posted a 1-0-1 record in net with an astounding 0.15 GAA. This broke the record statistically in goals-against-average (GAA) by only allowing one goal in 597:00 minutes of Big East action for a 0.15 GAA. This broke the conference record, previously held by former Irish goalkeeper LeKayshia Beene. Beene’s mark was 0.18 GAA in 1997. Nikki Weiss earned Big East recognition for her play during the season, including 0.955 save percentage and 0.71 shutouts per game.

Senior class sets marks

The Irish senior class has a 3-3, No. 5 Notre Dame has faced four consecutive matches. The streak started with a 4-0 victory over DePaul on Sept. 18, and included two golden goal victories. The streak ended with a 1-0 loss to South Florida, 1-0, in the final of the Big East Tournament on Nov. 6. On Sept. 18, the Irish used Golden Goal number one against DePaul to win 1-0. The streak start- ed with a 4-0 victory over DePaul on Sept. 18, and included two golden goal victories. The streak ended with a 1-0 loss to South Florida.

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