Women’s Soccer bounces back after tough opener

BY SUSAN MAC WILLIAMS
CRUSADER SPORTS STAFF

Big things are expected from the Women’s Soccer team this year after capturing their first Patriot League title ever during last year’s campaign. While the Lady ‘Saders were picked to finish only third by coaches in the league’s preseason poll, there is no reason to think that the Crusaders won’t come out on top again this year.

Senior co-captain Maria Lauring said, “We are young this year, but we’re adjusting, and the team has been playing strong so far.”

The women already have three wins under their belt, with just one loss lingering. The 2001 team has lost four starters, but returns three All League selection Tiffany DeCoff last season and Christine Arsenault, who backed up senior Laura McSharry, who along with Lauring and teams co-captain, has led the Crusaders in scoring. O’Shaughnessy, who is also the team’s first senior co-captain, has had a third senior captain, Kate O’Shaughnessy and sophomore Sarah Comeaux. O’Shaughnessy, who is also the team’s club co-captain, has led the Crusaders in scoring for the last three years, and Comeaux finished second on the team in scoring last year.

Also returning is a third senior captain, Laura McSharry, who along with Lauring and junior Caitlyn Lynch - a first team All League selection in her freshman year - will round out the defense. Returning in the midfield are sophomores Caitlin Dwyer and Erica Robbins, seniors Brandy Ault and Lee Hummer, and juniors Brandy Ault and Lee Hummer, and seniors O’Shaughnessy and Erin Patterson. Leading up front is Comeaux and freshmen Elizabeth Charnley. Several freshmen have already begun to see significant playing time, including Mackenzie Dickey and Allison O’Donnell. Starting in goal is sophomore Christine Arsenault, who backed up senior All League selection Tiffany DeCoff last year.

The Lady ‘Saders opened up their season Sept. 1 at Quinnipiac, where they suffered a 4-3 overtime loss. After scoring went back and forth in regulation, the Braves put the game to an end with a goal just 0:05 into overtime. Leading the Crusaders in scoring was Charnley with one goal and O’Shaughnessy with two.

The Crusaders have had no trouble bouncing back from their disappointing season opener, as they have won their last three games. The women traveled to Siena the day after their season opener, where they crushed their opponent 5-1. O’Shaughnessy led the scoring effort once again with two goals and an assist. Patterson, Dwyer, and freshman Danielle Carvaiho each contributed a goal, as the Crusaders outshot the Saints 22-4.

Facing their second overtime in just the third game of the season, the Saders were able to overcome Marist 1-0 when junior Lee Hummer scored the game winner in the 118th minute off an assist from O’Shaughnessy. The assist was O’Shaughnessy’s 17th of her career and ties her with Erica Robbins (1993-96) for the Holy Cross career assist record. Goaltender Arsenault recorded her first career shutout with the win over Marist.

The women kept their success rolling with their most recent victory over Maine last Saturday. The Saders were leading 1-0 with a goal from Hummer, but the game became deadlocked going into halftime when Maine scored off a penalty kick. The Crusaders regained the lead and captured a 2-1 victory when sophomore Caitlin Dwyer scored the final goal of the game in the 79th minute.

The Crusaders are in action today as they host Vermont at 3:30.

Closing in on McGwire, Bonds on pace to break the record

BY JIM MALONEY
CRUSADER SPORTS STAFF

Once again this summer Major League Baseball has provided all its fans with a reason to keep watching baseball. Many fans may have otherwise lost interest once their team was eliminated from playoff contention or face the growing pains of playing with less talent. With Barry Bonds on the verge of breaking the single season home run record, it’s hard to dispute that the media is giving a significant amount of attention to Bonds. Perhaps another reason that the media is focusing on Bonds so much recently is the fact that the playoff spots in the American League are all but decided. The media needs something to hold its audience’s attention, and Bonds is providing just that with his home run record.

McGwire’s record was set just three years ago when he eclipsed the former record of 61 set by Roger Maris in 1961. Before Maris’ incredible season, Babe Ruth held the record when he smacked 60 homers in 1927.

What McGwire and Maris have in common is that they broke long standing records that stood for 37 and 34 years, respectively. Because Bonds is chasing a record that has stood for 30 years, some have suggested that the home run record is being “cheapened” because hitters have become increasingly common in the modern day game.

For instance, of the five players to have ever hit 60 or more homers in a season at least once (Ruth, Maris, McGwire, Sosa, Bonds), three have done it in the past four years. In fact, McGwire and Sosa hit over 60 in both 1998 and 1999.

This recent surge in home run production has lead critics to suggest a number of reasons to explain this phenomenon. Experts have claimed that smaller ballparks, watered down pitching, and a smaller strike zone among other things have contributed to increased power numbers for players.

One can argue that the strike zone was adjusted this year to resemble what is written in the rule book, but it is hard to dispute that the National League does not have a number of small ballparks (including San Francisco). Almost everyone agrees that pitching in baseball has been very thin for the last decade, which was in part brought about by adding four new expansion teams in the 1990s.

Furthermore, Bonds is not the only one who is clubbing homers at an alarming rate this year. Sammy Sosa of the Cubs, who is no stranger to some run chases, and Luis Gonzalez of the Diamondbacks are also having tremendous seasons. After hanging tough to Bonds most of the season, Gonzalez has slipped back a bit and through Tuesday has hit .51.

Sosa, who always comes on strong in the second half, has inched closer to Bonds and stood tall with 54 through Tuesday. Three players with 50 plus homers and all of them reached that mark by early September? The game has certainly changed.

But let’s not be too quick to take credit away from Bonds. Part of the reason that the game has changed is due to the tremendous about of work players put in off the field. Many sluggers put in hours in the weightroom to strengthen their bodies in an attempt to improve their performance. Granted Maris and Ruth did not have this in their days, but the fact that sluggers today put in extra work should not be held against them.

Bonds is by no means being embraced by American baseball fans. His totals for 1993 and 1994 were during 1998, but this is likely due to his personality. He has never liked dealing with the media and has tried to keep as private as possible. On the other hand, McGwire seemed to share everything with the media in 1998, which took a visible toll on him. Staying somewhat private may not be a bad idea for Bonds. Obsessing over something can be mentally draining, and with the Giants in playoff contention, he may be doing what is best for himself and his team by staying out of the limelight.

Through Tuesday, the Giants trailed the Diamondbacks by one and a half games in NL West, but lead the Cardinals by a half game in the wild card. Although Bonds may not have the best reputation, he is a professional and I cannot see him putting his individual goals above those of his team. At 37, he is approaching the end of his career and still does not have a World Series ring despite playing on a number of successful teams.

Because he is in a heated NL West battle and still has to play numerous games against division foes, Bonds may be pitched around in the upcoming weeks. As he has done all season, look for Bonds to be patient at the plate and not swing at more pitches just to set the record. Bonds has walked an amazing 149 times this season, showing that contributing to the team is more important than achieving individual goals. Hopefully baseball will resume quickly after its schedule of games was temporarily halted after the heinous attacks on New York City and Washington D.C. by terrorists and Bonds will have an opportunity to break the record. Bonds has 18 games remaining to hit eight homers to break McGwire’s record.

This is certainly within Bonds’ grasp, especially after coming off a three homer effort on September 9 at Colorado. He trails Bonds or not, you cannot deny he has given baseball fans something to get excited about in September.