

September 7, 2007

Rock keeps rolling

By Brandon Fox
Rocket Sports Editor

As the September temperatures continue to get hotter, so does the SRU women's soccer team.

The Rock continued its brilliant start to the season, knocking off Shippensburg, Clarion and nationally ranked Edinboro to move to 5-0 overall and 3-0 in Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference-West play.

The Rock also moved atop the National Soccer Coaches' Association of America Northeast Regional Poll and climbed to No. 7 in the NSCAA's Division II national poll, its highest national rank since the Oct. 5, 2004, when SRU held the No. 3 spot.

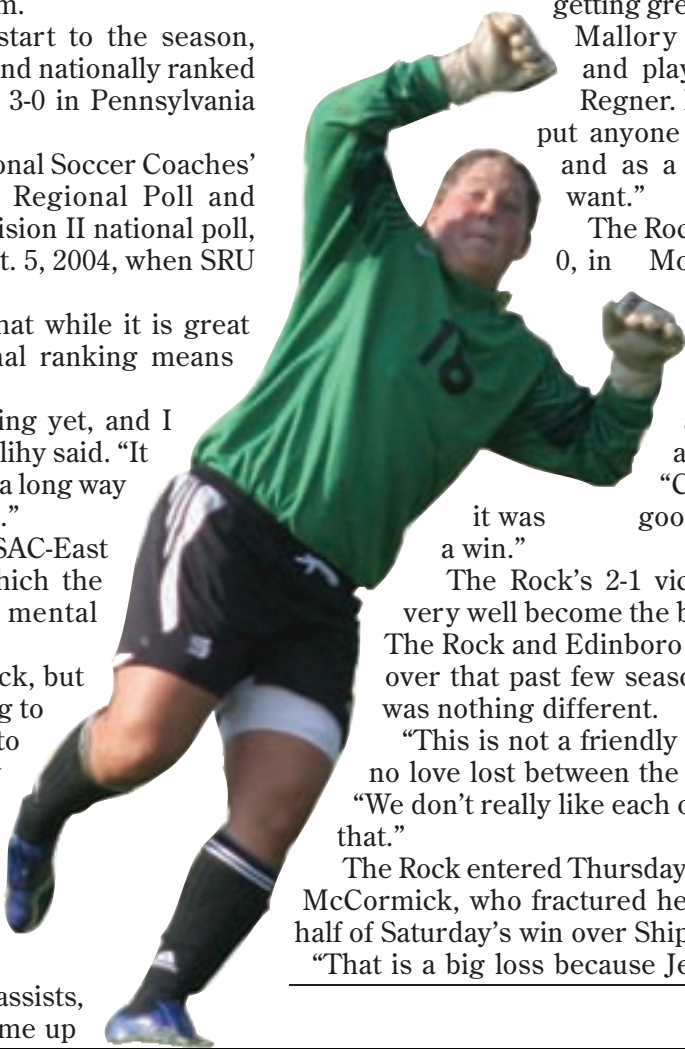
SRU coach Noreen Herlihy said that while it is great exposure for the program, a national ranking means nothing at this point.

"We have not accomplished anything yet, and I keep reminding the girls of that," Herlihy said. "It is still early in the season and we have a long way to go. Rankings won't win you games."

Last Saturday SRU knocked off PSAC-East foe Shippensburg 5-3, a game in which the young Rock defense made a few mental errors.

"We made some mistakes in the back, but we never really felt like we were going to lose," Herlihy said. "Again we have to remember that we have an entirely new defensive back four with the exception of Alexis Chiani, so it is just going to take a little time to find our groove, but we are improving every game."

In the victory over Shippensburg, Danielle Cooper scored two goals and Meghan McGrath added a pair of assists, as the scoring tandem once again came up



big for the Rock, but Herlihy pointed to her role players and her bench as the key to the game.

"It just shows the level of talent and depth that we have on this team," Herlihy said. "We are getting great efforts from everybody. Mallory (Neubert) is coming in and playing strong, so is Shelly Regner. It is great to see that I can put anyone in and nothing changes, and as a coach, that is what you want."

The Rock then took out Clarion, 2-0, in Monday's PSAC-West clash, which set the stage for yesterday's showdown with Edinboro.

"We certainly played a lot better defensively at Clarion," Herlihy said. "Clarion is a solid team and good for us to come out with

it was a win."

The Rock's 2-1 victory over Edinboro may very well become the benchmark for the season. The Rock and Edinboro have become fierce rivals over that past few seasons and last night's game was nothing different.

"This is not a friendly rivalry, there is definitely no love lost between the two teams," Herlihy said. "We don't really like each other and both sides know that."

The Rock entered Thursday's game without goalie Jen McCormick, who fractured her hand late in the second half of Saturday's win over Shippensburg.

"That is a big loss because Jen is such a good player,"

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ARCHIVED PHOTO
Junior Anastasia Urbanik goes for the kill in a game last season. Coach Laurie Lokash hopes Urbanik will provide veteran leadership for her young team.

Volleyball taking baby steps toward success

By Haley Gaidosh
Rocket Contributor

The Rock volleyball team hopes that the old saying "slow and steady wins the race" holds true as they prepare for their upcoming Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference-West schedule. That is because Head Coach Laurie Lokash's squad has 11 freshmen, including both setters.

Slippery Rock (5-3) won three out of four matches over the weekend at the California University of Pa. tournament, beating West Liberty State, Gannon and West Virginia State, with their only loss coming against Northern Kentucky.

Going 3-1 sounds pretty good, but Lokash continues to stress to her players that this season is a growing process.

"We have progressed from the first to the second tournament, but we still have a long way to go," Lokash said.

Over the weekend, it was apparent to the team and coaches that this learning process will be crucial to a successful season. Lokash said the team needs more consistency, especially with the setting. After losing Sarah Kirsch, Lokash's starting setter the last three seasons, to graduation, the Rock has to count on one of the two freshman setters to set the tone.

"Our two freshmen setters need to become more consistent with the play calling, positions of the ball, and their decisions," Lokash said.

She also said the setters are starting to learn more and are beginning to understand their hitters, but it is still not where it needs to be.

"Hitters need to be able to know where they are hitting from," Lokash said.

Lokash said that if the setters can increase the range of the sets, good things will happen for the Rock volleyball team this season.

Junior Anastasia Urbanik, the starting middle hitter last year who has been temporarily switched to the

right side by Lokash, knows how important the sets are to the Rock's success this year.

"We definitely need to connect more, because we are still not there yet," Urbanik said. "We are very up and down, like a roller coaster."

After the tournament at California (Pa.), Urbanik said the team played a lot better together.

"Right side is harder, but I have much higher expectations of myself," said Urbanik, who racked up 31 kills, 45 digs and nine service aces.

Urbanik said that she is adjusting to the position switch and learns more every day.

Lokash knows changing the positions of some of the upperclassmen requires a lot of adjusting. Last weekend she was happy with the way the upperclassmen, Urbanik and senior Andrea Campbell, were adjusting to the changes.

"They do whatever I ask them to," Lokash said. "The upperclassmen are pretty consistent."

Senior Louise Schultz has had to make adjustments to her game as well, playing a more vocal role this year. Schultz, who had 39 kills over last weekend, knows her team looks to her not just for kills but also for leadership.

"We aren't connecting yet, but we definitely played a lot better this past weekend," Schultz said.

When it comes to the sets, the Rock's main concern at this point, Schultz is confident that the two freshmen setters will get the job done.

"It is obvious the setters are working very hard," Schultz said.

Lokash knows that it is going to take baby steps to teach and develop as a team, especially with the young setters.

"It is like getting a new quarterback on a football team, or a new point guard on a basketball team," Lokash said. "The setters are responsible for every second

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Men's soccer back on track

Two straight victories help right the ship for SRU

By Erin Fisher
Rocket Contributor

If the first two minutes of play were any indication of how the game would end, it looked as though the Slippery Rock men's soccer team was going to dominate Salem International University at Bob DiSpirito Field on Wednesday afternoon.

As it turns out, the first two minutes would in fact predict the rest of the non-conference match, as the Rock defeated Salem 6-0, bringing their overall record to 2-2-1.

Salem headed into the game with no substitutions on the bench, a blistering sun and high humidity.

"We knew ahead of time they were only going to have 11 or 12 players," said Slippery Rock Head Coach Matt Thompson. "But we approached the game professionally."

Senior captain Steve Perri said the Rock's game plan for Salem was no different than for any other game.

"We prepared just as we would for a PSAC game," Perri said. "We try to look at all games as conference games."

Senior forward Ed Mocarisky set the pace with a goal 90 seconds into the

game. Jeremy Deighton sent a through ball in front of the net and Mocarisky fired one passed Leonardo Silva, Salem's goalkeeper.

"We have been trying to work possession in practice sessions," Thompson said. "We're trying to pass and move and attack more."

Perri also said that the team's plan of attack has changed so far this season.

"In years past we have played the longer ball, whereas now we are trying to play through all 11 players and utilize every strength," he said.

Perri and his teammates demonstrated this after Perri knocked in a rebound in the 31st minute of the game. It looked as though a give-and-go between midfielder Nick Christy and Mocarisky was not going to make it after Salem's keeper swatted it away, but Perri was there to clean up, putting the ball firmly in the back of the net.

The Rock ended the first half with 14 shots on goal, while Salem had only three.

The first half was nothing compared to the excitement and emotion the second half of play brought.

In 40 minutes, Slippery Rock managed to net four goals.

After three consecutive corner kicks,

defender Jeff Hamley connected off a pass by Perri, scoring his first goal of the season.

Patrick Cormac, a senior captain, responded less than 10 minutes later with a header in the back of the net.

Sophomores Iain Langstone and Lucas Feathers each added a goal to the Rock victory. Acting as the last line of defense for the Rock were Chris Cook and Brett Lelko, neither of which were tested during the game.

Tensions began building halfway through the second half, and in minutes, emotions were flaring as the Rock bench cleared in a tense moment. In all, three Salem players were ejected from the game and two were given yellow cards.

"Towards the end, (both coaches) agreed to stop the game, but the referees wanted to continue play," explained Thompson.

As the clock wound down, Slippery Rock players knocked the ball around among themselves, keeping away from Salem.

Thompson explained the move as a tactic to keep his players from getting hurt.

"I told them to stay away (from the other team) and not get injured. To be fair, we are a very disciplined and professional team; we kept our head in the game."

"Mainly we are working on attacking," Perri said. "We have a strong defense."

Slippery Rock came into the match-up against Salem after defeating conference opponent Bloomsburg University 3-2 at home on Saturday. Langstone, Mocarisky and Perri each contributed to the Rock total, while Deighton and Hamley each added an assist.

The team will travel to Kutztown on Saturday for the first of eight straight PSAC games. They will return home Sept. 12 against Lock Haven at 4 p.m.

"We want to get back over .500," Thompson said. "We want to be in the top four for the playoffs, but we are taking it game by game."



SAMANTHA CHALMERS/THE ROCKET
Freshman defender Derek Angus plays the ball forward in second half action Wednesday night against Salem International. Angus's defensive leadership has helped SRU go 2-0-1 in their last three games.