

Pioneer soccer dynasty in jeopardy

By C.J. Rieck
staff writer

Nothing lasts forever.

All dynasties crumble, sooner or later. At Oakland University, soccer coach Gary Parsons is trying to ensure the dynasty he has constructed remains intact.

That will be a difficult chore this season. The Pioneers, who finished 14-3-2 last fall but were bypassed by the NCAA Division II tournament selection committee, return just three starters.

"There are a lot of new faces," admitted Parsons, who had guided O.U. to a 76-17-8 record and into the playoffs in the three seasons prior to last year. "We've never had to replace eight starters before."

On the surface, that might sound like poor program planning. No coach likes to replace his entire team in a year.

PARSONS DIDN'T want to, either. But three of those starters, Mike Vigh, Raul Delgado and Dan O'Shea (from Livonia) — were lost to poor grades. That made a difficult situation even worse.

"I don't know what to expect at this stage myself," said Parsons. "Whenever you have eight new players on the field, it takes a lot of work. It can take years to get them playing well together. Of course,

we're not planning on it taking that long."

Parsons' and the Pioneers' challenge is formidable. O.U. has fielded the best soccer team in the state (in any division) for the past few years, but that distinction is also in jeopardy.

Still, the team is hardly talentless. "We probably had our best recruiting year ever," Parsons claimed.

The three starters returning are Marty Hagen, a senior from Troy Athens who scored eight goals — including six game-winners — in '85; Oray Haezel, a senior midfielder who set a new O.U. record for assists in a season (19) and scored seven times last season; and sophomore stopper

John Stewart.

IT'S A GOOD nucleus to start with. And Parsons is confident he has a cast capable of filling in the rest of the lineup.

Lost to graduation are both goalkeepers, Paul Larkin and Dave Martilla. Gino Soave, a sophomore from Harper Woods Notre Dame who attended junior college in Europe last year, is slated to fill that position.

"I don't think I could compare him with those guys (Larkin and Martilla) yet," said Parsons of Soave. "I think he has the potential, but we'll have to wait and see."

Soave could be tested more often than his predecessors. Stewart is the

only returning back-line starter, and Parsons has already decided to put Haezel on the front line, leaving the midfield to be rebuilt.

"We're trying to sort out our midfield right now," Parsons said. "That and our back line are our biggest question marks right now."

Replacing Delgado at sweeper will be either Mike Carlstrom, a transfer from Springfield (Mass.), Tech JC, or freshman Ender Ibbotson, from Windsor. Both, though, have been bothered by injuries in preseason drills, hampering their development.

At midfield, Tony Soave, Gino's brother, and Alan Stewart, John's brother, will vie with freshmen Dale

Hinrikson (Mississauga, Ontario), Eric Enyash (Southfield) and Ibbotson for starting slots.

THE FRONT line seems most solid, with Hagen, Haezel and junior Brian Fitzgerald (Southfield), the first sub at forward off the bench last season. Joining that group will be freshman Simon Mayo (Sarnia, Ontario), who has shown strong ability as a finisher during the preseason. Despite a load of question marks at several positions, Parsons has not altered his team's goals.

"If we're here and we're not trying to make the playoffs, we're not doing our job," said Parsons. "I think it's a realistic goal. That's what we're always shooting for."

Area kickers bolster Siena

By C.J. Rieck
staff writer

Problem was, it was mid-May when Siena Heights College administrators approved the addition of a varsity women's soccer team for this fall.

That's great news, but it doesn't leave much time for recruiting. Or scheduling or structuring a program.

At least the Saints didn't have to conduct a search for a coach. Doug Mello, who aided in coaching Siena's women's club team last year and is the men's varsity coach, agreed to handle both jobs.

Still, there's a big difference between fielding a club team and a varsity team. Mello needed players, and in a hurry. So he made a quick trip to Livonia and came away with more than he could have hoped for.

IN THE SHORT time he's been coach, Mello managed to sign five Livonia Stevenson graduates, one from Plymouth Salem, another from Livonia Churchill and one more from Schoolcraft College. These eight are expected to be the nucleus of Siena's team.

"It has been," admitted Mello. "a charmed recruiting year."

Indeed it has. Signed from Stevenson were 1985 graduates Danielle Montroy, Lisa Broccardo and Stephanie Beck, and 1986 grads Paula Divens and Maree Jamrog. And attending Siena this fall will be Julie Tortora, from Salem; Jennifer Sawicki, from Churchill; and Wendy Propp, from Saginaw MacArthur and Schoolcraft.

In all, Mello recruited 14 players. Another six are expected to be added from last year's club team and perhaps two others as walk-ons.

HIS SUCCESS in recruiting has made Mello not just hopeful as he approaches his first season in a new program, but confident of success. "Our goal is to make it to the (NIAA) nationals in Wilmington, Ohio, Nov. 21 and 22," he said.

"We probably got 85 percent of the players we wanted," Mello added. "These girls will be able to play right away. They could go anywhere and play."

"We'll be a speed, fitness, short-passing type of team. We really feel we have the best back line around."

That back line, Mello figures, will be Jamrog, Montroy, Propp and Diane Amers from Chippewa Valley. Such talent — each received mention as preps in all-state balloting — should provide a formidable defense. But there is another factor favorable for the Saints. Mello is inheriting an experienced contingent that has played together for several years.

"That certainly makes my job that much easier," agreed Mello. "Even though they're all freshmen and sophomores, it's like they're upperclassmen with the years they've played together."

MELLO WAS lucky in securing eight players of this caliber at such a late date, and he knows it. Several factors worked in his favor.

"It was partially due to the lack of (women's college) soccer programs in the state," he explained. "Plus, we're close to Livonia."

Siena Heights has no football program, so soccer has always been a sport of emphasis. When the Saints' men's team qualified for the NIAA tournament a year ago and finished 17-6-3 under Mello, more interest in soccer was generated.

"Our athletic program has really been on the move," said Mello. "And there were a lot of influential girls who pushed for a varsity women's team."

Once approval was given, Mello started recruiting. His first stop was in Livonia for the Stevenson Churchill game, which finished in a scoreless tie. Jamrog was the initial player to catch his attention, but once he expressed his interest, things snowballed.

"MOST OF my recruiting was done in the stands that day," Mello said.

Tom Montroy, a soccer official, told Mello of his daughter, Noreen Divens, the Stevenson coach, also pitched in, sending the Saints' coach tapes of several players who were interested.



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