

# OU loss a blow to playoff hopes

A year ago, it took a tremendous finish for Oakland University's soccer team to earn a berth in the NCAA Division II tournament, a berth the Pioneers rode all the way to the finals before losing.

It may take another similar regular-season closing act for OU to get a shot at repeating its performance of '86.

The Pioneers surrendered two first-half goals Saturday and fell at Gannon University 2-1. The loss dropped OU to 9-4-1; the Knights are 8-4-2.

More significantly, the Pioneers dropped from third to fifth in the Midwest Region rankings. The top three are guaranteed spots in the NCAA II tournament, with a possible fourth team getting an at-large berth.

Ranked ahead of OU in the region are University of Missouri-St. Louis, East Stroudsburg, Northeast Missouri State and GU. Making matters worse, OU has already played and lost to three of the four and has no game scheduled with NMS.

FOR THE SECOND consecutive game, the Pioneers gave up a goal they shouldn't have. GU scored after just 5:51 when defender John Stewart tried to clear the ball back to keeper Jeff Vakratsis. The pass was not a good one, getting behind Vakratsis, who slipped and fell when he tried to retrieve it. The Knights' Gerry VandeMerwe swooped in for the goal to make it 1-0.

GU added to its advantage at 31:04, with VandeMerwe again get-

ting the goal on a feed from Jim Diana. OU halved the Knights' lead when Earl Parris went airborne to convert a pass from Erik Enyedy out of the corner. Parris' left-footed, mid-air shot went over the GU keeper to make it 2-1 with 20:34 left to play.

OU had a golden opportunity to tie it with eight minutes left, but failed when Yong Song rolled a shot from 15 yards out just wide of the net. The Pioneers outshot the Knights, 16-8.

This weekend, OU hosts Lewis University at 2 p.m. Saturday and Northern Kentucky at 2 p.m. Sunday in the Central Region Classic. In Saturday's first game (at noon), Northern plays Shippensburg; in Sunday's noon match, Shippensburg and Lewis tangle.

# Pioneer netters 2nd in league

By C.J. Risaak  
staff writer

At first glance, it might be difficult to understand why Oakland University tennis coach Jim Pinchoff was so extremely pleased with his team's performance at the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference championship meet — when Ferris State won all nine final matches to capture its fourth-straight title.

But take another look. Because, for starters, there was never much doubt FSC would win the crown again. After all, the Bulldogs offer six scholarships (OU has none) and also has a pro tennis management major, which, basically, is a four-year marketing degree with an emphasis on teaching tennis and managing a tennis club.

That's quite a recruiting tool for FSC coach Scott Schultz. It also

makes it difficult to beat the Bulldogs, which no one in the GLIAC did.

BUT OU GAVE them a battle. FSC lost three sets in the entire tournament — all to the Lady Pioneers in the finals. Five OU netters reached the final matches, an accomplishment that earned the Lady Pioneers second in the GLIAC and Pinchoff conference coach of the year.

"Mathematically, we had a chance to beat Ferris, but just to get five into Saturday's finals was absolutely tremendous," said Pinchoff of the weekend tournament in Midland.

OU finished with 42½ points to 63 for FSC. Hillsdale was third with 37, with Lake Superior State fourth (32½), Wayne State fifth (32), Saginaw Valley State sixth (29) and Michigan Tech seventh

(16). Marge Messbarger enjoyed the best tournament for OU, reaching the finals in both No. 2 singles and No. 1 doubles, and taking her FSC opponents to three sets in each. Messbarger lost to Diane Makonen 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 in singles, then teamed with Kris Jeffrey in No. 1 doubles, losing to FSC's Makonen and Kathleen Watch 6-2, 2-6, 6-4.

OTHER OU singles finalists were No. 5 Kelly Hayden, who was beaten by Natalie Geyer 6-3, 6-3, and No. 6 Lori Kiffner, who lost to Jana Pearson 6-0, 6-0.

In doubles, the Lady Pioneers' No. 3 team of Kiffner and Hayden fell to Geyer and Lori Meyer 3-6, 6-1, 6-0.

The runners-up finish in the GLIAC was OU's best since 1979 and came on the heels of an 8-1 dual-

meet season (5-1 in the GLIAC). The Lady Pioneers were obviously well prepared for the tournament.

"We were absolutely ready," said Pinchoff, in his first year of coaching at OU. "We clinched second after the first day (Friday)."

Pinchoff got his team ready by focusing on mistakes during final practice sessions. "Our routine for practice changes as we get closer to a match," he explained. "We really work on not making errors, because that's what usually decides matches. And that usually tends to get you mentally ready."

In the other four OU matches, No. 1 singles Jeffrey finished sixth, No. 3 singles Heather Duncan was fifth, No. 2 doubles Duncan and Gretchen Ballen placed fifth, and No. 3 singles Ballen captured third.

Ballen won her consolation finals match against Saginaw Valley State's Linda Paeglis 6-2, 6-3.

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