

Ocelots can settle old score

SO MUCH HAS CHANGED, but the memory lingers, like the unexpected loss of a close friend. It's something that's never forgotten.

A year ago, Schoolcraft College's women's soccer team was busily practicing and preparing for the anticipated end-of-the-season trip to New Jersey, and the chance to defend its NJCAA championship.

Then came the startling news: SC was not going. The Lady Ocelots had been beaten, without even getting as far as the tournament. A long-ignored rule was invoked; there would be no defense, no title, no trip, no chance.

As the word spread among team members, it was met with disbelief. "It was depressing," said Kelli Davis, the sweeper from Livonia Churchill. "You get your hopes worked up, you work for this all year long, and then you find out you don't even get a chance to win it or lose it."

A HALF-DOZEN players returned this season from the '88 team. And they brought with them a vendetta.

There's one team they have their collective sights set on: Monroe (N.Y.). SC Monroe's the reason SC stayed home last year, going in the Lady Ocelots' place. It didn't help that Chuck Salamone, the Monroe coach, was the man who ran the tournament selection committee.

The process for picking NJCAA tournament teams has since been revised. SC will have to play — and win — a pre-tournament match to qualify. But at least the Lady Ocelots will have a chance.

Their road to the NJCAA tournament couldn't have a more appropriate beginning. This weekend, SC travels to the Monroe CC Tournament.



C.J. Risak

playing three junior college opponents — including the host, Monroe.

No need to say which game means the most. As Davis said, "We're just looking forward to playing Monroe, to show them we deserved a chance last year and they took it away from us."

NOW, IT SHOULD be clearly understood that while most of those on the '89 SC team weren't around in '88 to witness all the tom-tomery, there's no need for concern: They'll get a dose this weekend. And, Salamone is still around.

He was the one who put this tournament together. He was the one who scheduled the Lady Ocelots, who depart Thursday evening on their 10-hour bus trek to Monroe and arrive early Friday, to play at 4 p.m. that afternoon against Anne Arundel (Md.) College.

And Monroe? Well, Monroe only plays two games in the tournament, on Saturday and Sunday. How convenient. Salamone will be able to sit and watch and plot strategy for Saturday's game while SC battles Anne Arundel.

Davis found an optimistic view. "Well, (Friday's game) gives us a chance to get more organized."

Fair enough. But this is not the pinnacle of the season. That won't be reached for another month.

These are the first three games of '89 against JC foes, not the last three.

DAWN GABRIEL, who serves as co-captain with Davis, knows it. "I think this will be really good for us," said Gabriel, a midfielder from Churchill. "Last year, I didn't know what to expect when we played JC teams. It's a totally different game. The competition is tougher, the pace is quicker."

Now comes a warning: Beware of SC. Monroe and Salamone took a chance last year, such antics are akin to throwing ammunition on an open fire. And the Lady Ocelots arrive this weekend armed with more than just vengeance.

The defense, which sparked in '88, is virtually intact. The offense is rebuilt and more potent. Coach Nick O'Shea has called this his best team — including the '87 championship squad. Balance and depth is the difference. While the '87 team had several outstanding players but almost no depth and a few weak spots, the '89 edition is solid throughout.

THE TEAM has notched 20 goals in four games, with forwards Shannon Meath (seven), Joan Arndt (seven) and Cindy Bowman (five) accounting for 19 of them.

"I know the girls are up for Monroe," acknowledged O'Shea. "I really feel Monroe's the reason we didn't make it (last year)."

But there's more. "The girls this year really feel this team has the potential to do well at nationals. This is their first chance to prove it, and to see what it would take to win the title."

Incentives are stacked high in SC's favor. As Davis said, with a gleam in her eye, "It's going to be an interesting weekend."

SC men won't travel easy path

Every season, Schoolcraft College's men's soccer season consists of two games — at Macomb CC and at home against Macomb CC. Hanging in the balance of those two matches is the Region 12 berth in the National Junior College Athletic Association Inter-regional Tournament.

It's been that way every year but one in the last decade (in 1987 SC lost to Cuyahoga CC, so the race was decided before the second meeting with Macomb). This year, more than likely, will follow a familiar pattern. But SC's game at Delta CC Saturday indicated the road will be a rough one.

The Ocelots prevailed 5-1, but it took some breaks early in the game, a pivotal save in SC's goal, a team lacking control and a three-goal outburst by Brendan O'Reilly to clinch it.

They came out like they were going to bury us in the first five minutes," said SC coach Van Dimitriou. Indeed, in the first 15 minutes of the match, Delta lost a goal on a delayed offside call, banged a shot off the

soccer

The victory improved SC's record to 2-0-1 in the region and 4-0-1 overall. The Ocelots, ranked ninth in the last NJCAA poll, travel to Cuyahoga CC outside Cleveland Saturday.

crossbar and missed a penalty shot.

THE LATTER was awarded after the drive off SC's crossbar. The rebound was rolled back toward the goal, where Jeff Saylor deflected it with his hand. But on the penalty shot, SC keeper Jeff Shuk made a diving stop to keep the game scoreless.

Shuk's save started the turnaround for the Ocelots. "No question the guys got a boost from it," confirmed Dimitriou. "Shuk needed something like that. He had let in some bad goals."

Delta's frustration, combined with some personnel changes by Dimitriou (inserting Saylor on defense), reversed the momentum. And so did O'Reilly.

After missing a shot from 18 yards out on a breakaway, Dimitriou pulled his forward aside. "I told him not to shoot until he was right on top of the goalkeeper," the SC coach said. "He was shooting too soon, trying to be something he isn't. He's not a finesse player, he's a bull."

O'Reilly adopted the advice and put it to immediate use with a salute remaining in the opening half, converting on a breakaway sprung by John Cortese to give the Ocelots a 1-0 lead at halftime.

THE SECOND half was a physical battle, an indication that SC and Macomb may still possess the top talent in the region, but they'll have to fight

to gain the title. Three Delta players were red-carded (ejected) in the final 45 minutes, and SC lost keeper Shuk on a red card.

The Ocelots made it 2-0 on O'Reilly's second goal, another breakaway, this one started by Khalid Zeldan a minute into the second half. Nine minutes later, a direct kick by Chris Speers from 25 yards out made it 3-0, a goal made possible by a mis-positioned defensive wall.

With Delta playing two men short, SC increased its lead to 4-0 on a Zeldan drive, also from about 25 yards out, with Cortese assisting. O'Reilly finished the scoring for the Ocelots, heading in a chip from the end line by Darin Dobin. Delta was without three players by that time.

One went to the sideline with a red card after leveling wing Chris Moore, who suffered a slight concussion.

The victory improved SC's record to 2-0-1 in the region (the tie was against Macomb) and to 4-0-1 overall. The Ocelots, ranked ninth in the last NJCAA poll, travel to Cuyahoga CC outside Cleveland Saturday.

Jets brace for game with Compuware

By Marty Budner
staff writer

Tim Ople has promised to showcase an improved Bloomfield Jets junior hockey team this year.

Well, the Jets will receive their first severe test of the season Tuesday when they host state champion Compuware. Faceoff is 8:15 p.m. at the Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook Arena.

The game will feature Eric Lindros, a 16-year-old center for Compuware who is considered one of hockey's most talented junior players. A recent story in The Hockey News called Lindros the "Whiz Kid" who could be an impact player in the NHL today.

Ople is not fazed by Lindros nor the Compuware crew.

"It will be a big one, especially with the 'Whiz Kid' coming to town," Ople said. "My scouts have seen him play. But I've made a point not to see him yet. I'll reserve my opinion until I see him in person."

"I think the Compuware team has been living on their name too long," he said. "I wonder what kind of club they would have if they had to live on a Bloomfield Jets budget."

COMPUWARE IS the defending champion of the nine-team North American Junior Hockey League, which began its expanded 44-game schedule over the weekend.

The league, designed for 16-20-year-old junior players, is divided into two divisions.

The five-team Western Conference includes Chicago, Indianapolis, Redford, the Kalamazoo Junior K Wings (a Minnesota North Stars affiliate) and the Bloomfield Jets. The four-team Eastern Conference consists of Compuware, the Detroit Junior Wings, Melvindale and Buffalo.

The Jets won just six of 40 games last year and lost its top two scorers in Doug Weight (92 points) and Dean Hulett (63 points). However, Ople said he has strengthened his team through a series of moves, including a couple of trades.

Team captain Mike Nodler (a 5-foot-8 forward) was obtained in an

hockey

off-season trade with Compuware. Goaltie Eric Kruse (5-10, 160 pounds) played with the Detroit Junior Wings last season.

Grant Patterson, a 17-year-old forward from Southgate, was 17th in the league scoring race last season with 50 points. Livonia's Mark Johnson tallied 54 points last year and is expected to be one of the team's top scorers this winter.

CARL SCHUMACHER of Farmington Hills is expected to be one of the team's top defencemen. Other players reading in the Observer & Eccentric coverage area include defenceman Mike Oleszewski (Livonia), forward Ron McDonald (West Bloomfield), forward Scott Lock (Livonia) and forward Mike Knelding (Livonia).

"The strength of our team will be the ability to play four lines — we're very deep," said Ople, a Troy High School graduate. "We're going to cut down on our goals-against. We're definitely a meat-and-potatoes, grind-it-out, blue-collar type team."

"Traditionally we don't play well during the regular season but we come on in the playoffs," he said. "I'm hoping to change that though this year. We hope to do a lot better over the 44-game season."

Ople said the Jets and Compuware will battle this year for the "Purple Paddle" trophy. The trophy is actually an old, purple goal stick that annually was awarded to the Oak Park/Southfield Chiefs series winner in the old Wolverine Junior B League. The league folded in the mid '70s.

Ople recently found the "Purple Paddle" and decided to use it to draw interest and create a rivalry between his club and the Compuware team, which are the closest franchises in location in the North American Junior Hockey League (NAJHL).

The Jets opened their season Tuesday with a 7-3 loss to Melvindale. Mike Nodler, Rob McIntyre and McDonald were the goal scorers.

Crusaders win contest with defense

The defense was the difference Tuesday for Madonna College's volleyball team as it defeated NAIA District 23 rival University of Michigan-Dearborn 15-4, 15-10, 5-15 and 15-12 at Madonna.

"We played really good defense," said coach Jerry Abraham after his Fighting Crusaders improved to 9-3 overall and 2-1 in the district. "Offensively, the kids hung in there."

Sophomores Jenny Sladewski (Livonia Stevenson) and Lisa Dreake (Redford Bishop Borgess) paced the defensive effort.

Stacey Girard, a freshman outside hitter from Redford (Livonia Ladywood), collected 13 kills; Tonia Smith, a freshman from Walled Lake (Central), had nine; and Kristy McFadden, a sophomore from Borgess, had seven. Wendy Smith, a senior from Walled Lake (Western), had six service aces.

THE VICTORY capped a week of successes for the Crusaders. Last Friday, they played the University of Findlay (Ohio) and Mount St. Joseph (Cincinnati) in Findlay, and came away with two wins. Madonna beat Findlay 15-8, 15-4 and St. Joseph 15-12, 15-15 and 15-13.

From there, the Crusaders traveled to the Nazareth College Tournament in Nazareth Saturday and returned home with the title. In the final, Madonna beat Kalamazoo Valley Community College 15-3, 14-15, 15-7.

Earlier in the tournament, Madonna beat KVCC 16-14, 15-5; lost to Tiffin (Ohio) College 15-15, 15-8, 15-9; and beat Mundelein (Chicago) College 8-15, 15-2, 15-8.

Girard collected 36 kills in the tournament. Smith added 24 and McFadden and Melissa Mars, a freshman from Borgess, each contributed 20.

Madonna plays at Schoolcraft College at 7:30 p.m. tonight, then travels to the Aquinas College Tournament Saturday.

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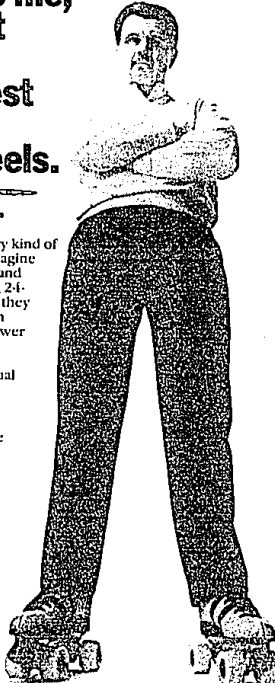
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