



Tuesday, September 30, 2003

Men's soccer a top-ranked team in nation

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Oakland University's **men's soccer team**, the reigning Mid-Continent Conference regular-season and tournament champions, heads into the heart of its 2003 season as one of the top-ranked teams in the nation.

Key victories this season have put Oakland on the map in NCAA Division I athletics. On Aug. 30, Oakland defeated nationally ranked Portland 2-1 in double overtime, which also gave coach Gary Parsons his 300th career victory. Subsequent wins over Marquette (4-1), Western Michigan (5-1), and nationally ranked Akron (2-1) propelled the Golden Grizzlies to their highest-ever Division I ranking. During the week of Sept. 22, Oakland was ranked No. 12 in the **National Soccer Coaches Association of America** (NSCAA) rankings, which is considered the nations' top men's soccer poll.

With a 4-0-3 record, OU currently is No. 16 in the **College Soccer News** poll, No. 17 in the NSCAA poll, No. 18 in the **Soccer Times** poll and No. 21 in the **Soccer America** poll. This is the first season Oakland has been ranked in all four polls.

"To be honest, I really don't have a big reaction to (the rankings)," Parsons said after Oakland cracked the NSCAA poll after the win against Portland. "I don't want the players worried about these rankings because at this early stage of the season they really don't mean much. I'm only interested in the results we are getting and how we got them and what we need to do to continue to get good results."

Among those contributing to the team's success are sophomore goalkeeper Jeff Wiese and junior defenseman Ryan Rzepka. Wiese was named Mid-Con Defensive Player of the Week twice this season after recording six saves over No. 10 Akron, and four saves against Western Michigan. He also leads the conference with a 0.85 goals-against average. Rzepka, who leads all defenders with two goals, including one game winner, was named to Soccer America's Team of the Week on Sept. 25.

The Golden Grizzlies could possibly earn higher rankings this week as they play home games against unranked Michigan (5-3) on Tuesday, Sept. 30, at 4 p.m. and IUPUI (1-6-2, 0-0-1 Mid-Con) on Saturday, Oct. 4, at 1 p.m. The game against IUPUI will be Oakland's first Mid-Con match this season. In other conference games this month, Oakland will host Valparaiso and travel to Western Illinois and Centenary.

For rosters, schedules, archived stories and more information on OU's men's soccer team, visit the **OU Athletics** Web site.

SUMMARY

OU's men's soccer team, the reigning Mid-Continent Conference regular-season and tournament champions, heads into the heart of its 2003 season as one of the top-ranked teams in the nation. With a 4-0-3 record, OU currently is No. 16 in the College Soccer News poll, No. 17 in the NSCAA poll, No. 18 in the Soccer Times poll and No. 21 in the Soccer America poll.

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