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OU soccer teams begin new seasons

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

The Oakland University **men's** and **women's** soccer teams are ready to repeat the successes of 2000, but enter the new season from different perspectives. The women have an abundance of seasoned players, while the men will field talented newcomers that lack experience.

The **men's team** finished last season with a 12-6-1 overall record and won its first Mid-Continent Conference regular-season championship at the Division I level with a 4-1 record. In the conference tournament, the Golden Grizzlies defeated Missouri-Kansas City 4-3 in double overtime, then lost to Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis 2-1 in triple overtime.

The Grizzlies begin the 2001 season with a young squad, with only three seniors and two juniors on the roster. The team lost 10 letter winners and nine starters from last season.

"This will be the youngest team I've ever had," said head coach Gary Parsons. "There will be a lot of work for us trying to get everybody on the same page as fast as we can. Defensively we lost a lot of players from last year. The whole back line is gone, so we are going to have a lot of fresh new faces on the field defensively."

The men have a tough schedule this season with non-conference games against Marquette, Portland, Cincinnati, New Mexico and No. 18 Ohio State. The Grizzlies also face in-state rivals Western Michigan, Detroit-Mercy, Michigan and Michigan State.

"Our games versus other state teams are always important because they give people in the community a barometer of where your program is in the state," Parsons said. "We have been considered the top team in the state and we want to maintain that reputation."

Among the leading returnees from last season are sophomore forward Anders Vollen who scored five goals and had one assist in 13 games, senior midfielder Inge Pedersen who led the team with 19 points, and senior goaltender Mike Skolnik who started all 19 games and recorded seven shutouts, made 59 saves and had a 1.10 goals-against average.

Defenders competing for starting positions include sophomore Brian Williams and red-shirt freshmen Ryan Rzepka, Frank Raburn and Matt Connor.

"We have a good corps of players that we recruited that will evolve and create a very strong team," Parsons said. "On paper, we probably have potentially improved ourselves from an attacking standpoint."

The men's team got off to a strong start in its first regular-season game on September 1, when the Golden Grizzlies defeated visiting Marquette 1-0.

In contrast with the men, the **women's team** has a wealth of experience on its roster. The Golden Grizzlies return eight of 11 starters, including senior midfielder and Olympic Gold medalist Anita Rapp, for the 2001 season.

"This is definitely the most experienced team I have had at the Division I level, if not ever," said head coach Nick O'Shea. "Not only do we return a majority of the starters, but we have sophomores and incoming freshmen that have the ability to make an immediate impact."

Last year the team finished the regular season at 10-5-1 with a 4-1 Mid-Continent Conference record. The Grizzlies then defeated Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis 4-1 and Oral Roberts 2-1 in overtime to win its first Mid-Con Tournament Championship and finish 12-5-1 overall.

The team lost two experienced stars in Mid-Continent Conference Player of the Year Kristen Luoma and two-time all-conference player Kaja Lund, but retains a solid attack and bench strength.

Rapp earned co-player of the year in her junior season and finished third on the team with 26 points, seven goals and 12 assists in 17 games. She redshirted in 2000 to participate in the Olympics for her native Norway. Senior forward Ashley McGhee and senior midfielder Gail Wilson are the team's co-captains. McGhee led the team with 13 goals last year and ranked second on the

team with 30 points and 50 shots. Wilson started all 18 games last season and led the team with 11 assists.

"Anytime you return an Olympic Gold medalist it is exciting," O'Shea said. "Everybody knows what Anita can do on the field and Gail and Ashley have proven their abilities for three straight years."

Also returning for OU are all-conference players Debbie Cartmel (junior midfielder), Kim Moore (junior defender), Erica Demers (sophomore midfielder) and Sarah Buckland (freshman goaltender).

The Golden Grizzlies' schedule includes three teams in the top 25 including No. 25 Michigan, No. 24 Marquette and No. 21 Southern California.

"This is the toughest schedule I have ever had," O'Shea said. "We put these teams on the schedule to see where we rank among the elite and to prepare us for conference play."

The women are off to a 2-0 start after defeating Marquette 2-1 and Wisconsin-Milwaukee 5-1 in the Verizon Wireless Tournament, held in Milwaukee over Labor Day weekend.

For rosters, schedules, statistics and detailed season outlooks, visit the [men's](#) and [women's](#) soccer pages on the [Oakland University Athletics](#) Web site.

SUMMARY

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