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Men's lacrosse club ranked No. 10 in nation

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Oakland University's **men's lacrosse club** recently finished its most successful season, ending with a 15-3 record and No. 10 ranking in the United States Lacrosse Intercollegiate Associates (USLIA) coaches poll.

For the first time in the team's nine-year history, Oakland competed for a national title at the **USLIA National Championships** in St. Louis, Mo., May 7-10. Oakland lost to Michigan in the first round, but rebounded to defeat Chapman University and Colorado in the loser's bracket. Sophomore attackman Billy Binge was named second-team All-American and Central Collegiate Lacrosse Association (CCLA) Offensive Player of the Year. Senior attackman Towbey Kassa and senior midfielder Jon Maychak received All-American honorable mentions, and coach Dwayne Hicks was named CCLA Coach of the Year.

"This was an awesome year for us. I knew going into the season we would play well," Hicks said. "Our goal was to make it to the nationals and compete, and we showed we can do that. I think we can compete against any team out there.

"The tournament and regular season really put us on the map. People realize now that Oakland is a national contender."

Oakland entered the tournament against Michigan, the only team it had lost to all season, and found it hard to overcome Michigan's attack, giving up seven goals in the final quarter and losing 15-8.

"The score didn't reflect the intensity of the game," Hicks said. "We held Michigan close through the third quarter and had some opportunities where we could have taken a lead and put pressure on them, but we didn't quite finish the goals. There also was a bad call at a crucial point in the game, so instead of having a two-goal lead, we found ourselves two goals down."

Oakland played impressively in the loser's bracket, defeating Chapman 19-11 then Colorado, which was ranked No. 6, 16-12. Chapman and Colorado are each considered national title contenders, Hicks said.

"We pretty much ran right past Chapman," Hicks said. "Colorado has a goalie who was voted first-team All-American this season. They started their second-string goalie and we took a 9-3 lead. Then they inserted their top goalie for the second half and we scored nine more off of him.

"The main theme for us going into the tournament was gaining respect. A lot of people wondered about Oakland and how good we really were. So we said, 'Let's surprise these guys and show them.' If there was any doubt before, now we have respect. A lot of the California teams paid attention to us. The tournament was absolutely gratifying. Our seniors will always look back fondly on this season."

Oakland's strong tournament performance also will help with scheduling more nationally known opponents next season.

"The Stanford and Arizona coaches already have expressed an interest in coming out to play us," Hicks said. "The University of Georgia coach said Oakland has the best 16-man squad he's seen. Most of the bigger schools have 40 players on their rosters, which is a testament to the talent of our players."

Hicks will spend the rest of the summer recruiting players to replace the seniors who graduated and prepare for team practices that begin the second week of September.

"The majority of our team is made up of local talent," Hicks said. "We'll see which players decide to stay in the area to go to college after the end of the high school season. The kids get good training here. By the time I get them, we mostly work on fine-tuning and taking their game to the next level.

"We're losing five key players, but I believe we have what it takes to be a national contender next season as well. There's nothing but a strong future for the Oakland lacrosse team."

For tournament news and results, visit the **U.S. Lacrosse Intercollegiate Associates** Web site. For a team roster, game reports, recruiting information and more, visit the **OU Men's Lacrosse** Web site.

SUMMARY

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