



Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Soccer team wins Mid-Con title, headed to NCAA

The **Oakland University women's soccer team** won its fourth straight Mid-Continent Conference Tournament title and earned its third consecutive NCAA Tournament appearance.

The Golden Grizzlies will face the University of Michigan in the first round of the NCAA Women's College Cup on Friday, Nov. 14, on the campus of national No. 2 seed Notre Dame. The winner of the Oakland/Michigan game will go on to play the winner of the Notre Dame/Loyola game on Sunday, Nov. 16.

Oakland (15-4-1, 6-0 Mid-Con) is one of the nation's hottest teams as it enters the NCAA Tournament. The Golden Grizzlies have won 13 of their last 14 contests and were perfect against Mid-Con competition, which gave the team its fourth Mid-Con regular-season crown in five years. OU, which was the top-seeded team in the Mid-Con Tournament, posted its third undefeated league slate in five years and beat Western Illinois (1-0, OT) and host Oral Roberts (3-1) to capture the Mid-Con Tournament title. Included in Oakland's successful season was a 10-match win streak, which started after a loss to UCLA and ended with a loss to Western Michigan.

Mid-Con Coach of the Year Nick O'Shea was more than happy with his team's play at the Mid-Con Tournament, as the Golden Grizzlies made good on the preseason poll's prediction of them as the team to beat.

"It was a difficult game. ORU is a good team and they're tough to play at home," O'Shea said. "We came out the second half, dominated play and capitalized on our opportunities."

Senior Erica Demers (Welland, Ontario) was named the Mid-Con Tournament MVP. Demers and her teammates junior Laura Cowham (Caledonia, Mich.), freshman Marianne Samdal (Tiller, Norway) and sophomore Kristi Swaving (Albuquerque, N.M.) also were named to the all-tournament team.

The Golden Grizzlies have relied on a terrific defense this season, which has allowed just 18 goals in 20 matches. Mid-Con Defensive Player of the Year Therese Bjorke (Lovenstad, Norway) anchors the team, while goalie Sarah Buckland (Burlington, Ontario) has 78 saves and a 0.82 GAA. Offensively, Oakland has five players who have recorded at least 15 points. Samdal leads the team with 25 points (11 goals, 3 assists), while Mid-Con Offensive Player of the Year Shelly Piccirillo (Niagara Falls, Ontario) follows close behind with 24 (11 goals, 2 assists) and Newcomer of the Year Lisa-Marie Woods (Oslo, Norway) has added 19 points (6 goals, 7 assists).

Oakland played four games against teams that made the 2003 NCAA Tournament field, going 2-2 in those contests. Included in that group of games was a 1-0 win over Michigan on the road in September. The Golden Grizzlies also topped Illinois (1-0) on the road, while losing to top-five ranked UCLA (6-2) as well as Western Michigan (3-2).

In just its fifth season of sponsoring women's soccer, the **Mid-Continent Conference** is sending a team to the NCAA Tournament for the third straight year. Oakland lost to Cincinnati, 3-2, in its first appearance in 2001 (which also came at Notre Dame) and fell to Michigan (1-0) last season.

The Golden Grizzlies also will serve as hosts for the 2003 Mid-Continent Conference Men's Soccer Tournament on Nov. 14 and 16. The tournament champion will receive the league's automatic bid to the NCAA Men's College Cup.

For more information on OU's soccer teams, visit the **OU Athletics** Web site.

SUMMARY

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