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ONEONTA STATE WOMEN'S SOCCER PREPARES FOR SUNYAC TOURNAMENT
Red Dragons look to avenge only conference loss against Plattsburgh in semifinals

ONEONTA, N.Y.—As the Oneonta State women's soccer team prepares for the SUNYAC tournament this weekend, they have three goals. The first is the obvious, winning the tournament and getting back to the NCAA tournament for a ninth straight season. The second will be to capture the conference tournament championship, something that eluded them in 2006. The third will be staring at them on Friday, which is avenging its only conference loss in the last nine years when they face Plattsburgh in the tournament semifinals at the National Soccer Hall of Fame beginning at 11:00 a.m.



The Red Dragons are the top seed again this year for the conference tournament after completing a 9-1-1 record in the SUNYAC. Oneonta had entered the 2007 season with a 95-game conference unbeaten streak, which reached 101 before they played Plattsburgh on the road on Oct. 6. The host Cardinals, who had been the last team to defeat Oneonta back in the 1998 SUNYAC tournament championship game, won the game 4-0, thus ending the NCAA's longest conference unbeaten streak in the history of men's and women's soccer at any level.

Oneonta didn't win the 2006 SUNYAC tournament, which was the first time since 1998 that they didn't win the conference championship. Last year, Geneseo eliminated the Red Dragons in a shoot out after the two teams battled to a 1-1 draw. In the shoot out, Geneseo prevailed 7-6 to advance to the championship game, which they lost to Brockport.

Oneonta will enter this year's tournament 15-3-1 overall while coming off a 3-2 double overtime loss to Hamilton at home last Saturday in the regular season finale.

Offensively, Oneonta has collected 80 goals to this point in the season while allowing only 16. The Red Dragons have four players with 28 or more points and one player that are just short of 20 points. Oneonta has recorded 12 shutouts this fall that included five straight between Oct. 12th and the 25th.

Individually, Oneonta's two main offensive weapons have been senior **Mary Velan (Stamford/Stamford)** and junior **Sarah Begley (N. Chili/Churchville-Chili)**. Begley is having her best season to date with 19 goals and nine assists for 47 points, which leads the team. Begley's 47 points eclipsed the single-season record of 45 set back in 2000 by current coach, Liz McGrail, and then tied in 2005 by Velan.

Velan, who became the program's all-time leading scorer earlier this season, currently has 17 goals and six assists for 40 points. Entering the tournament she stands at 165 points on 69 goals and 27 assists.

If Oneonta gets by Plattsburgh on Friday, they will advance to the championship game and play the winner of the Cortland/Brockport semifinal on Saturday at 11:00 a.m. at the NSHOF.

Oneonta went a combined 1-0-1 in its meeting with the other semifinalists this fall. They defeated Brockport on the road 4-2 and tied Cortland 0-0 on the road in its conference finale on Oct. 20.

The winner of the SUNYAC tournament will receive the automatic birth to the NCAA Div. III tournament that begins on Wednesday, Nov. 7 with first round games at various campus sites around the country. The national championship weekend is scheduled for Nov. 23-25 at Disney's Wide World of Sports in Orlando, Fla.

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