

EAST TENNESSEE STATE 2005 Buccaneer Women's Soccer

2004 Season Review

The East Tennessee State University women's soccer team finished up its final season in Southern Conference play with a 5-8-4 overall record, and a 2-5-4 conference record. Disappointing after a 2003 season that saw the Bucs garner 12 wins and a fourth-place finish in conference play.

ETSU battled competitively to the end in a close Southern Conference season. The squad garnered its two conference wins against UT Chattanooga (2-0) and Wofford (1-0). During the 2004 campaign, the Buccaneers faced six overtime contests, five of which came against conference opponents. Also of the eight losses dealt to the team this season, six were truly heartbreaking as they were decided by only one goal.

Individually, nine players contributed to the ETSU offensive effort and were led by junior Erin Ashton and sophomore Rebecca Murray, each of which tallied eight points. Ashton recorded two goals and a team-leading four assists, while Murray recorded a team-leading four goals. Ashton's two goals and four assists last season now place her as ETSU's individual career recordholder in goals with 24 and tied for first in assists with 14. She also took home individual awards for the second consecutive year, including selection to the SoCon All-Conference second team and to the 2004 Academic All-District IV Third Team. She also earned the prestigious National Association of Directors of Athletics (NACDA) Coca-Cola Community All-American award this past spring. In addition to her stellar play on the field, she is also very active in the Tri-Cities community and has also volunteered in Peru and Honduras.

Due to the team's defensive efforts throughout the season the team recorded six shutouts and maintained a low 1.33 goals against average. Defensively, the Bucs were led by juniors Meghan Morris and Kerri Burke, sophomores Blair DeGraw and Trista Haupt, and by freshman goalkeeper Christine Parks.

At the close of the season, the team also had to say a fond farewell to its one senior midfielder Jennifer Fields. Fields was one of three individuals to play and start in all 17 matches during the season and made over 70 career appearances with the Bucs. While Fields' presence and leadership on the field will be missed by her teammates, 14 return and five incoming players are expected to return to compete for the Bucs in the 2005 season.

Head Coach Heather Henson commented, "This was a learning year for us as a team. We battled through a lot of close games. Unfortunately, the record did not represent the team that was on the field this season. We lose one senior and now will begin preparing for next year. I feel next year we will get back to the results we had a year ago."

2005 Season Outlook

Forwards -

The Bucs return the core of the starting line up with another year of experience and something to prove. Erin Ashton is expected to lead the attack as she looks toward putting the finishing touches on an



already bright career. She will be joined by veterans Lauren Kulish, Becca Murray and Adrian Mobley.

Ashton will continue to rewrite the record books this year. She has already set the career goals scored and career points records at East Tennessee State. She comes into the season on the verge of also setting the career assists record.

"Erin is a wonderful player and an even better person," said Henson. "She has put this season at the top of her to do list and is ready to help the team achieve its goals."

Kulish has played every game for the last two seasons and will be expected to do the same in the 2005 campaign.

"Lauren is a very deceptive forward, whose versatility makes her a difficult mark," commented Henson. "I know that Lauren has saved her best for this season. She had an outstanding spring and has worked very hard to make sure that she is ready for this sea-

son. She will be more of a threat as we have seen improvements in her willingness to take her shots."

As a sophomore, Murray lead the team in number of goals scored, as well as sharing most points with Ashton. As a junior, Murray is expected to be a major contributor for the Bucs. She could also see time at the outside midfield position.

"Becca has started to come into her own," said Henson. "She has started to really play to her strengths and allow the game to come to her. I expect her to really create a lot of scoring opportunities for our team in the season to come."

Mobley played in 15 of the Buc's 17 games last season. "Maturing is the key for Adrian this year," said Henson. "She has the tools to be very good. She showed glimpses of that potential last year, but has to continue to develop her consistency. I think Adrian has taken some steps toward becoming a big member of this team."

Newcomer Rachel Layer will be a player to watch. "Rachel is a very athletic player who has a knack of scoring goals by making backs make mistakes," said Henson. "She is very strong in the air and should be dangerous on every set piece."

Midfielders -

The Bucs midfield should be very deep this year as it returns several veterans



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and adds some quality young players. The Bucs will be led in the midfield by juniors Emily Fulcher and Alex Schwark and accompanied by veterans Aubree Snyder, Katie O'Bryan and Hannah Johnson. Newcomers will consist of Ashley Craig and Meredith Goldman.

Fulcher who has played every game possible for the last two years and started every game last season brings a great deal of minutes and maturity to the center midfield position. Emily was second on the team in scoring last season and second in points. "Emily is a cornerstone for our midfield," said Henson. "Emily is a consistent player, who battles for everything. I know that she is ready for the upcoming season."

As a sophomore, Schwark started every game for the Bucs and looks to improve from her two assists last season. "Alex continues to improve her game and do all the little things that make a difference," commented Henson. "She has become a more dangerous player in the off season as she continues to work on her crosses."

As freshmen, Snyder and O'Bryan shared a room and time on the field; as a result they became more and more effective. "It was nice not expecting two freshmen to set into the center of the park together and play 90 minutes a game," said Henson. "They did a great job and have learned a lot. I think they will both have great seasons. Katie, whose season was cut short due to injury, has recovered fully and has put in a great deal of time into training and preparing for the season. Aubree worked hard this spring; she got a lot of touches and has worked through some things this year. I expect both of them to continue to develop and become a dynamic duo."

Hannah Johnson returns to the Bucs after a great spring. "Hannah was a young player last year whose heart and drive really started to show in the spring," said Henson. "She got off to a slow start in the fall, but did some really good things in the spring. She has worked very hard on her game and should give the team some quality minutes."

The new ladies in the midfield should be able to compete immediately for the Bucs. Ashley Craig and Meredith Goldman are both very versatile and have the ability to play on the flanks or in the middle of the park. "Ashley is a very gamey player," commented Henson. "She is a student of the game who understands attacking opportunities and is strong in the air. Meredith is a very athletic player, who has the ability to go end line to end line all day and do it quickly."

Defenders -

The defense will return a core group that has played together for the last two years. The Buccaneer defense has always been stingy and this year should be no different. The defense will be anchored by seniors Kerri Burke and Meghan Morris and juniors Blair DeGraw and Trista Haupt. Freshman Mandie Elieff will add depth to a solid group.

Burke has been a three-year starter whose versatility and ability to go into the attack creates scoring opportunities. "Kerri is one of the most selfless players on our team," said Henson. "Her attitude and work rate are invaluable to our success."

Morris, the Bucs' center back for the last three years, returns for her senior year to anchor the defense. "Meghan sets the tone for our backs; she is a rock," commented Henson.

"She loves to get stuck in, but loves to step into the attack and take her opportunities."

Degraw and her vision of the field will continue to increase the team's solid defense, but also allows her to step into the attack to create scoring opportunities for the frontrunners and midfielders.

Haupt is a player who plays on the outside as well as the center back position.

She is a tenacious defender who is excellent at man-to-man marking duties. She loves to deny the opponent from any shots and does an excellent job at it.

Goalkeeper -

Filling the goalkeeper position for the Bucs will be freshman Erin Bilyeu. Defensively, this will be the youngest position on the team and the Bucs will rely on the seasoned backs for training, wisdom, and knowledge of their role in the ETSU system. "I have full faith in Erin to step into this position with the passion and commitment of a veteran," said Henson. "Erin is fearless in the goal and feels no pain, she has the ability to make the simple and great saves defensively as well as begin the attack."

2005 Schedule

The Buccaneers will begin a new journey this year entering the Atlantic Sun Conference. Out of the 20-game schedule, ETSU will have 10 first-time opponents.

"We are excited about the new teams we will be playing; we know there are challenges ahead but we will be ready for them," said Henson.

ETSU will begin the season with a home scrimmage on Aug. 20 vs. Morehead State before the regular season begins on Aug. 26 at UNC Asheville. The Bucs will have their first home game Sept. 9 vs. non-conference rival Radford. ETSU will have a challenging road schedule for the 2005 season, preparing the team for conference travel as they play on the road for the first couple of week-ends of the season.

