

Lady Braves tie Clayton State on road

By Matt Smith
Sports Editor

The Black and Gold women's soccer team couldn't manage an overtime goal Oct. 3, as the team tied the Clayton State Lakers 2-2 in a double overtime draw.

Despite out shooting the Lakers 24-16, including a 12-7 advantage in the first half, the Lady Braves' offense failed to find the back of the net for the game-winning golden goal.

"We have only been out shot by one other opponent this season," explained UNCP women's soccer head coach Lars Andersson. "When I look back at the statistics of this season we are dominating the opponent offensively. We just aren't executing when it comes to putting the ball in the back of the net."

UNCP scores first

UNCP drew first blood in the first half when at the 27th minute mark sophomore Britney Joiner took a shot from the top of the penalty box that sailed past Clayton State goal keeper Dominique Trappio to give the Lady Braves an early 1-0 advantage. Junior Karmi Dagnachew assisted on Joiner's goal.

Lakers respond

Clayton State responded to the Lady Braves' early attack, scoring their first goal eight minutes later. Clayton State's leading scorer, Cherie Sayon, blew a shot by UNCP goalie Rea Segoviano to knot the



UNCP sophomore Britney Joiner dribbles the ball in the Lady Braves game against Clayton State.

Photo courtesy of UNCP Sports Information

score at one apiece with a ball to the left half of the crossbar.

One minute later, the Black and Gold saw their early lead disappear when Sayon found herself open midfield for a breakaway score for her second goal of the night. The goal was Sayon's 12th of the year and gave the Lakers a 2-1

edge heading into half-time.

In the second half, the Black and Gold tied the score at 2-2 on a header in front of the Clayton State goal off a corner kick. Freshman Andrea Collen sent the corner kick over the Clayton State defenders, finding freshman Fanny Forsman for a

game tying goal at the 70th minute mark.

But, even with the early second half momentum, the Lady Braves couldn't capitalize on the road, as the score remained tied after two scoreless overtime periods.

The Lady Braves out shot the Lakers 3-2 in the

two overtime periods.

"We are creating goal scoring opportunities, but are having trouble in the final third part of the equation," Andersson explained. "We have to execute better. That will be our recipe for success for the rest of the season, and the way through the Peach Belt if we want to

make it to tournament play.

"We have to take care of our goal scoring opportunities that we are given," he said. "We will continue to address it in practice."

Joiner and junior Samantha Dunn led the Black and Gold with five shots on the night.

Braves' wrestler Davis continues quest for Olympic gold

By Nick Phillips
Asst. Sports Editor

Two years ago, Braves senior wrestler J.J. Davis was walking the campus of UNCP as any other student, any other athlete.

A sixth place finish in the Division II National Championships in the spring of 2008 and a summer training trip to the United States' Olympic Training Center changed that.

Last winter, Davis sat out a year of collegiate wrestling to train for his trip to the OTC, and this summer Davis rolled around and went head-to-head with some of the best in his sport.

The dream that he had worked towards since high school was a reality. But standing and admiring his idols and Olympic icons was not the reason Davis was in Colorado. He had work to do.

"I got to hang around like I was an Olympic athlete, too. Everyone was treated the same. It was just an experience of a lifetime for me," Davis said about his experience.

Culture shock

The change in altitude can be hard for anyone experiencing it for the first time, let alone someone training and competing against the nation's best.

"The altitude was crazy. The first week I couldn't talk on the phone

and walk at the same time," Davis said. "Given that, wrestling was difficult too, because it was closed in like a sauna almost."

Along with the altitude came the mountains. Davis, admittedly scared of heights, had to suppress that fear, as many training exercises centered around the mountains, valleys and hills.

"It took some time, but eventually I got rid of my fear of heights...ok, I didn't get rid of it completely," Davis joked.

"I accommodated everyone by facing my fears and doing it, but I just know my heart dropped every time I looked down," he said.

Star watch

Upon arrival, Davis said he was star struck, recognizing faces and names of athletes that he had seen on TV and read about. Gold medalists, runners up in the Olympics, they were all there. Davis was an equal.

Steve Fraser, who became the United States' first Olympic Gold Medalist in Greco-Roman wrestling at the 1984 Games, is now the US Greco National Team Coach. His words brought Davis from out of the clouds and set Davis back on track.

"He told me to get in there and do what I do best...get in there, fight hard, do what I did to get

out there. After that I was hanging with the best of them," Davis said.

Davis also had the opportunity to hear several Olympians speak, including 1996 Olympic Decathlon Gold Medalist Dan O'Brian, who instilled in Davis a valuable lesson that Davis has taken to heart and is passing along to his teammates at UNCP.

"He said that you have to be comfortable being uncomfortable, and it makes so much sense, because whatever you are doing, you are never going to be completely comfortable," Davis said.

Summer vacation

The biggest point that gets lost in Davis' story is that he did this over summer vacation, a time in which most other students at UNCP were hanging out at home or the beach, or working a job for a little money.

"I can't think of a better way to prepare for a senior year," said UNCP head wrestling coach Jamie Gibbs.

"If six weeks of training with the world's elite doesn't motivate you, then not much will," Gibbs added.

In any sport, coaches speak of commitment, practice and dedication as something that is year-round with no offseason. Davis took this to heart, and took a chance to train and learn from the best.

Two-a-day practices against the country's best are far different from lifting weights and working on technique with teammates on your own.

Davis traded this idea in for his suitcase and a journey, away from family and friends and everything that he was familiar with.

Down time

Aside from training, Davis also had a little bit of free time. It was summer, after all.

Ping-pong, pool and YouTube were three of Davis' favorite things to do when he wasn't on the wrestling mat.

"Call of Duty, oh man, do they play Call of Duty all the time up there. It's almost a religion up there to play Call of Duty. They even have their own team up there," Davis said.

And, of course, the musician in Davis found a guitar and strummed a few beats, which led to another YouTube video for him. The video shows Davis with members of the Croatian National Team, which also was at the OTC.

"I'm just messing around playing stuff, and they are loving it," Davis said.

"But I'm mad because they won't put the one up that the Croatian is rapping to one of my beats, in their language. I didn't know what he was saying, but it was hilarious."

Davis is still playing guitar now that he is back on campus.

He has already performed several small gigs and has some other people playing with him, forming his own little band.

Music lover

Students across campus have taken a liking to something that Davis calls his way to "not be so intense and grrr all the time."

When students, faculty, and anyone else reads Davis' story, he hopes that both his musical and athletic abilities will cross over.

"Whenever they read it, hopefully they will swap sides and be like 'Oh he wrestles too?' or 'He plays music?'" So hopefully everything continues to work out," Davis said.

Senior campaign

Coming back to UNCP and going up against Division II competition after facing the best of the best all summer long, it would be easy for Davis to get complacent and sit back.

But Davis is back on the mats as fearless as ever, ready for what lies ahead. Davis has not only begun using O'Brian's saying in his own life, but he's trying to instill that thought pattern in his teammates as well.

After a recent practice, no one could leave

until they did some sort of tumble, something they didn't think they could do, but to at least try it. And they could all thank Davis for that idea.

"The whole thing was to surpass your fears and try it, because that's the difference between a guy that gets a pin and the guy who doesn't, or the guy who wins a close match. He's not afraid to try things, he's fearless, he's going to go all out, and that's what I'm trying to instill in the guys now," said Davis about his mental coaching.

2009 season

Davis' senior season will not be complete for him unless he finishes his collegiate career with a National title.

"I don't care if I win any other tournaments, but I want to end it with a National title. It will be the first one at UNCP, and history is what I like making," he said.

Regardless of his final season statistics, Davis has already accomplished more than he could have envisioned and will go down as one of the Braves' wrestling greats.

A permanent residency and opportunity to train at the Olympic Training Center full time after graduation is another choice that awaits him, but for the time being, Davis has switched his sights from Olympic gold to collegiate greatness.