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For More Info. Contact: Bob Frischmann, Sports Info. Director (314) 984 7306

Magic News

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Meramec's Karl Earns Historic 300th Career Soccer Win

Jeff Karl, the all-time NJCAA career wins leader in women's soccer, earned his historic 300th win Sunday, Sept. 2 with a Meramec 2-1 victory over visiting Barton County. Freshman forward **Michelle Spencer** (Notre Dame) scored both goals for the Magic, while **Angie Rich** (DuBourg) picked up both assists.

"I never in my wildest dreams thought I would ever win 300 college games," said Karl. "I really appreciate a lot of women that for over 20 years have been really dedicated to the sport."

Karl (300-106-36) is in his 25th year as Meramec's only head coach of women's soccer. His squads won back-to-back national titles in 1991 and 1992. And, from 1991-'93, his teams won 35 straight games, a national record. In 2005, he was inducted into the St. Louis Soccer Hall Of Fame. He is also in the Meramec Magic Hall of Fame.

Fourteen times Karl has been named Region XVI Coach Of The Year, and he has coached 37 NJCAA All-Americans.

"Jeff Karl has put his heart and soul into Meramec women's soccer," said Athletic Director **Bob Bottger**. "He is the best."

Women's Soccer Finds Strength In Added Numbers

Freshmen have never been as popular as they are this year on the women's soccer team. That's because a year ago, an injury-depleted roster caused the Magic to struggle through many a game with the bare minimum 11 players. Now, with the prosperity of 17 players and possibly one more arriving, it's business as usual for the perennially successful squad.

"I am very excited that the freshmen are looking very good right now," said returning goalie **Haley Fox** (Lindbergh.) I think our offense will be a lot better than last year and it'll be a pretty good season."

Coach Karl has recruited a talent-laden roster for a run at a regional title and a berth at nationals.

"I got this girl out of Lafayette - **Sara Sanguinet**," said Karl. "She's a left wing forward. She's got a powerful left foot and is a very skilled player."

Sanguinet proved Karl correct on opening day at Southwestern Illinois College Sept. 1 by scoring Meramec's lone goal in a 4-1 loss. She also got off two other strong shots that were stopped by an excellent SWIC goalie. Two other freshman recruits have also drawn praise.

"I have two girls from Notre Dame who finished third at state last year - **Sam Lang** and **Michelle Spencer**," said Karl. "I think Spencer was the second leading scorer on their team. They're a nice little combo - they can both play midfield and forward."

Once again, Karl proved prophetic in his scouting report when Spencer scored both Magic goals in Karl's 300th win against Barton County, 2-1, on Sept. 2. Sophomore **Angie Rich** (DuBourg), who assisted on both of Spencer's goals in the historic victory, also agrees that the team's infusion of talent is at the right time.

"Everyone is contributing something different," said Rich. "**Meghan Thomas** (Kennedy) has a really accurate shot, she's really good. **Lara Menke** (St. Francis Borgia) just steps up and steps in wherever she's needed. All of the returning sophomores are doing well and all of the incoming freshmen are doing well adapting to playing college ball."

And, Rich is no slouch herself. As a freshman last fall, she scored two goals and added four assists. Now, as an older-and-wiser sophomore, even bigger things are expected from her.

"She also has quite a few weapons out there now to really work with," said Coach Karl. "Last year she really only had Kelly Koshak - this year she's going to have three or four people she can work with that can really do some things with the ball too."

Another sophomore who will be looked to for good things is **Stephanie Godfrey** (Marquette), but that has been a constant for over a decade with Meramec soccer and the Godfrey family. Stephanie's three older sisters have all kicked for Meramec and Coach Karl, starting with Amber ten years ago. Tara and Jennifer Godfrey have all followed in recent years.

"I watched them play every single game with him," said Godfrey. "They all went to nationals so I'm hoping that this year I have a chance to follow them and go to nationals so that I'm not the only sister who hasn't.."

The Magic next play at home on Saturday, Sept. 8 at 11:00 against Forest Park. It will be the first game on the field's newly renovated lawn.

'Battling' Men's Soccer Magic Off To Fast 3-2 Start

The old sports axiom of "that's how the ball bounces" could certainly apply to the men's soccer team in the first two weeks of their season, and not in a kind way. Despite not getting many positive bounces at key times in games, the Magic are 3-2 and rapidly adjusting to creating their own luck.

"Last year we lost three in a row and some of the guys were wondering how good we were going to be," said sophomore forward **Mike Riti** (Webster Groves, "and then we won 14 in a row. It's just a matter of time - it's the first time a lot of us have played together. It's just a matter of time before we get the ball rolling."

The Magic got the season rolling in the right direction with a 2-1 come-from-behind victory over Lincoln Land Aug. 25. **Jon Myers** (Ft. Zumwalt S.) knotted the game on an unassisted free kick blast. Then, Mike Riti (Webster Groves) converted a **Ben Hamilton** (Glendale, MO) feed for the game winner in the final minutes of regulation. In the next game, Aug. 28 against Southwestern Illinois, Riti had an assist in a 2-1 loss.

"I think a lot of it's just being at the right place and right time," said Riti. (Kyle) Gamache made a nice finish when I made the assist on that one."

Kyle Gamache (Francis Howell Central) scored what is hoped to be the first of many goals on the year. The sophomore midfielder is one of the team captains, an honor he also shared in high school. He feels the key to the season lies in the "D".

"We need to get our defense straightened out," said Gamache. "We're going to score some goals - they're going to come. If you don't allow any goals, you can't lose. So, I think we have to get our defense straightened out, we'll get it figured out."

And there is some quality help in figuring out the game plan. High-flying midfielder **Cory Kossman** (CBC) has been a ball magnet, challenging for every loose ball and corner kicks to the goal. Kossman has been a physical presence all over the field.

"I just try to receive the ball and hold it and try to find the next guy and keep it simple - hope something good comes out of it," said Kossman.

In the Missouri Juco Invitational Tournament at Chesterfield Aug. 30, the squad battled a tough Barton County team, coming up short, 1-0. Despite the loss, third year head coach **Brian Smugala** was upbeat.

"Today's game was a pretty good reading on what we can be and what I think we will be," said Smugala. "This (Barton County) is a team ranked in the top five and they scored a goal off a long throw-in and beside that, we didn't give them a whole lot. I thought we had two or three solid chances ourselves - we just didn't convert."

Freshman goalie **Dan Kotsis** (Kennedy) made spectacular diving save after save to keep Meramec in the game, as did the defense behind sophomore backs **Eric Fuchs** (Vianney), **Jimmy McDonnell** (CBC), and a new face on defense.

"We got eight guys behind the ball, and the team defense was tremendous," said Smugala. "We tried a new player at sweeper, **Steve Jeon** (Parkway South), and he did a good job. I think Danny Kotsis had a good game also."

The Magic next face Region XVI foes Florissant Valley (away, Sept. 7) and Forest Park at home on Saturday, Sept. 8. The match against the Highlanders will be the first on the Magic's newly renovated field. Opponents can expect one thing for certain from Meramec in '07.

"We all fight hard to the end, give it 90 minutes," said Gamache, "and we don't stop until the game's over no matter if we're down 2-0 or up 4-0 we're all going to go out and play hard."

Volleyball Magic Host Florissant Valley Wed., Sept. 5

The volleyball Magic, under tenth year coach **Lee Clauss, Jr.**, begins the regional portion of its schedule with a home match against Florissant Valley Wednesday, Sept. 5 at 7:00. Regional seeding will be determined by the regular season results, with Meramec hosting the post season tourney this year on Nov. 3.

The team is coming off a 2-3 performance at the McKendree JV Tournament where Meramec defeated Shawnee and McKendree JV. Losses came at the hands of Oakton, John Logan, and Mineral Area.

Meramec opened its home schedule Aug. 29 with a five game thriller of a win over East Central, after taking a second place spot in the season opening John Wood Tournament the weekend before.

David Mirikitani Wins Jiu-Jitsu World Championship

Despite no previous experience in the sport of jujitsu, Meramec volunteer wrestling coach David Mirikitani recently did the seemingly impossible for a 37 year old who had not even competed in his own sport of wrestling for 14 years - he won a world jiu-jitsu championship.

Mirikitani, son of longtime Magic wrestling coach Ron Mirikitani, won the 154 pound white belt title Aug. 25 at California State University - Long Beach in a championship tournament sanctioned by the International Brazilian Jujitsu Federation.

"Right after the finals I was still out of breath," said Mirikitani. "I called my dad and caught him at his desk. I was like 'Hey, I won!' and he was 'That's great - who do you fight next?' I said, 'No, I won, I won!' He goes 'You won THE tournament? You're the world champ?' I said 'yea' and he got real excited."

And, Ron Mirikitani is still excited about David's title, but also proud of the strategy that was responsible for it.

"He's real smart and there's just certain areas that in this kind of competition where we looked at the rules and found out where he was strong and where he was weak," said Ron. "We just tried to work on his strengths and try to keep out of the danger areas."

Mirikitani got the itch while teaching wrestling as a part of jujitsu techniques to fighters at North Broadway Jiu-Jitsu, working with owner Brian Guidry. Guidry recognized Mirikitani's natural ability at the sport and encouraged him to take it up and compete at the Los Angeles event. After a brief summit meeting with wife, Julia, Mirikitani, was beginning a four month training regimen to prepare for the tournament.

"Jiu-Jitsu is ground fighting, fighting on your back" explained the new champ. "Jiu-Jitsu is a huge part of ultimate fighting. When you're on your feet you're basically boxing and wrestling. When you're on the mat, you're wrestling and doing jujitsu."

In the sport, much like ultimate fighting, choking is legal. Matches are one, five minute round where a winner emerges on points, or by submission. Mirikitani was no stranger to high level competition as a wrestler - he was a two time NJCAA All-American at Meramec in 1991 and 1992, and a three time Missouri high school state champion out of Kirkwood High. The excitement of competing revived many a familiar chord in the warrior.

"It was good for me as a current coach to remember what it was like to cut weight, diet, and work out," said Mirikitani. "And, also, that whole getting nervous before you compete. There's that adrenaline dump, being in the middle of battle. You think you remember and you just don't."

The soon-to-be champ did remember his mat instincts against opponent Rob Capili, drawing upon his decades of wrestling background to formulate a unique strategy.

"We had a real good game plan," said Mirikitani. "My coach, Brian, did a great job. He basically taught me how to make it into a wrestling match as much as possible. I knew that if I did that I had a real good chance of winning."

And, like in wrestling, one takedown can mean all the difference between winning and losing. This match would be no different.

"With about a minute and a half left I got an inside takedown, a move my dad worked with me on for the last month," said Mirikitani. "When I got it, I landed in a triangle choke with my head and arm inside of his

legs. I was winning, but he almost had me choked out.. For the last minute and a half I just fought off the choke and I won.”

With coach Guidry and wife, Julia, in attendance, Mirikitani took his place on the winner’s stand and received his world championship medal - reviving memories of a long past stellar wrestling career at an age when most men are content to slip into a sedentary middle age. Not so for the energetic, and eternally wired Mirikitani, who is always looking to the future. For now, he can look to the past weekend with fond memories.

“I can say that for one weekend in my life, I was the best,” he said.