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Magic News

October, 2007

'Comeback Kickers' Enter Stretch Run 8-3-1

With three comeback wins and one come-from-behind tie under their belts, the men's soccer team enters the October stretch run with an air of confidence.

"Even if we give up the first goal we don't let our heads go down," said sophomore captain **Kyle Gamache** (Francis Howell Central.) "We stay in the game, and we're capable of coming back against any team."

The most recent comeback was against a tough Washington University JV team at Francis Field Sept. 17. The Bears held a 1-0 lead at the half, but in the second half **Steve Carenza** (Marquette) blasted a goal on an assist from midfielder **Matt Mantia** (Webster Groves) to tie the match.

Then, late in the second half, sophomore **T.J. Neusel** (CBC) booted in the winner on a pass from **Scott Gyllenborg** (Lindbergh.)

"It means we have a lot of versatility," said sophomore captain **Jimmy McDonnell** (CBC). "We can use our bench and get a lot of guys minutes and work hard enough to come back and win those games."

One of the bench players that has sparkled is sophomore midfielder **Mike Riti** (Webster Groves.) Riti scored the winning goal against Lincoln Land in the season opener Aug. 25, and also played a big role in a comeback overtime 2-1 win over Forest Park Sept. 8.

"We were down a couple of starters so people had to step up and we got some scoring from some people who usually don't," said Gamache. "Riti scored, and Scott (Gyllenborg) got the game winner. People stepped up when they needed to and just fought hard as a team."

Riti, the team's sparkplug, has four goals and one assist - good enough to be the third top scorer on the team.

"With Mike Riti, it's always huge when he's coming into a game," said goalie **Dan Kotsis** (Kennedy.) "He's a big energy shot just being out there for our team."

Another big shot in the arm for the Magic is the leading scorer - forward **Ian Porta** (Marquette) with four goals and five assists. Right behind him is sophomore **Ben Hamilton** (Glendale) with five goals and two assists. Midfielder **Cory Kossman** (CBC) has three goals and a pair of assists.

"Things are starting to click," said third year coach **Brian Smugala**. "We've got our lineup pretty well set. All the guys are knowing what their roles are. The best thing is it seems like a pretty tight group."

In goal, the one-two punch of Kotsis and freshman **Chris Miller** (CBC) has also clicked. Both goalies have shown exceptional skills and quickness. Miller has two shutouts and has recently been ranked as high as third nationally among goalies in goals against average. Kotsis is a hard-nosed battler who's not afraid to take on attackers head-on.

The Magic will have a challenging start to October with an undefeated Lewis and Clark squad at home on Tuesday, Oct. 2 at 4:00. Lewis and Clark is 10-0, with a win over defending national champs Jefferson College.

"They beat a tough Jefferson team and they haven't lost," said Smugala. "We've got an uphill battle against them."

Injury Plagued Women's Soccer Team Finds New Formula

Calling it the worst year for devastating injuries in his quarter century at the helm of the Magic women's soccer team, coach **Jeff Karl** has revamped his remaining roster of 16 players.

The team lost freshman forward **Michelle Spencer** (Notre Dame) against Forest Park Sept. 8 to a knee ACL injury that will require surgery. Spencer had two goals and an assist in just three games and looked to be the scoring juggernaut of the team.

A week later, against Johnson County, freshman **Galena Ring** (Farmington) also suffered a season-ending ACL injury while **Katie Jungk** (DuBourg) broke her leg in the same game and will be out through the end of the year.

In spite of the historic setbacks, the Magic pulled a rabbit out of its hat Sept. 22 at Lewis and Clark.

"We don't have a lot of depth, so I told the girls they had to watch for opportunities where we can take a chance and really get offensive and score," said Karl. "Lewis and Clark really didn't play very well in watching **Meghan Thomas** (Kennedy) and she got free and went one-on-one against the sweeper, beat her, and got a shot with her left foot to beat the goalie."

The shot, which sealed a 1-0 Meramec win, could have easily been the shot heard round the world - it was the first Magic win over Lewis and Clark in five years. And, the victory provided Meramec with a pair of enormous triumphs in September - Lewis and Clark, and a 1-0 blanking of nationally ranked Johnson County on the Magic's newly renovated field.

"I feel like we can play stronger on our own home field," said Karl. "We just have to try to be as prepared as possible for every game we play right now. In the sense of strong, experienced players we're on limited numbers now."

One shuffle in the line up has involved freshman goalie **Michelle Smith** (Mehlville.) Smith, who had been making occasional appearances in goal, spelling sophomore goalie **Hayley Fox** (Lindbergh), is now playing both goal and the field, sometimes in the same contest.

"She's very capable," said Karl of Smith. "She has good hands in goal and she's very good technically. Overall as an athlete, she could probably be our best athlete out there."

Smith showed off both ends of her skills in a 0-0 double overtime tie against Forest Park Sept. 23, playing the first half of the game in goal, and then moving to the field in the second half and overtime. Other players have also helped the team in its time of need.

"Defensively, **Amanda Campbell** (Lutheran South) has really stepped up," said Karl. "She had really outstanding games against Forest Park and Lewis and Clark. **Lara Menke** (Borgia) has also stepped up and done some good things. She's been playing her position (stopper) just as it says - she stops just about everything that comes through. **Theresa Weil** (Oakville) has taken on a leadership role as a captain and is doing a super job."

Meghan Thomas, meanwhile, has quietly assumed the scoring leadership with her six goals and two assists. Her efforts earned her the NJCAA Player Of the Week honors for the week ending Sept. 22.

"I think she really read into it with Michelle Spencer going down and she was going to be one of our scorers," said Karl. "Meghan just said it's time for me to step up and score and she can, and she will."

Other scorers who can, and will score are **Sarah Sanguinet** (Lafayette) with two goals and four assists, and **Samantha Lang** (Notre Dame) with three goals and two assists.

The Magic, at 5-4-1, open October versus Springfield College on the road Friday, Oct. 5. They'll also have a rematch with nemesis Lewis and Clark at home on Wednesday, Oct. 10.

"I think our starting unit's going to be fine if we can play a good, strong first half and if we can score I think we'll be in pretty good shape," said Karl.

Volleyball Magic Look To Find Winning Focus

The Magic volleyball squad is looking to build upon their recent five game win over Rend Lake Sept. 28. The win snapped a six match losing streak and has been reflective of a season of ups and downs for the talented team.

"The goal is to pick it up and we need to just start winning some games and show people who we are," said sophomore outside hitter **Stacey Baxter** (St. Clair.) "I think if we talk and start passing a little better we'll be there."

"There" refers not only to the remainder of the season, but also to the Region XVI Tournament looming on Saturday, Nov. 3 that Meramec will host. The Magic last won the region four years ago at home, and are hopeful the home court could again provide an edge.

"I think that will definitely have a big impact on how we play," said sophomore **Leana Proetz** (Pacific), "our home crowd, and our gym we practice in everyday so I think it will help us a lot."

Also helping is the team's hitting, behind six solid hitters.

"Right now I'm very impressed with the hitting of **Julianne Seebeck** (Oakville) and **Leanna Proetz**," said tenth year head coach **Lee Clauss, Jr.** "I think **Sam (Huson - Windsor)** and **Amy (Moran - Mehlville)** have picked up their game quite a bit. The last week or so I think that **Kristin Braasch** (Maplewood) is coming on stronger and **Nikki Torno's** (Oakville) always been good this year. She's been very consistent."

And Proetz has been leading the attack. The middle hitter leads the team in kills per game with a 2.960 average and in hitting efficiency with a 31.740% average. Seebeck is second in kills per game with a 2.303 average. Torno is third at 1.919. On defense, Meramec has also seen some strong play.

“Defensively **Carista Coleman** (Oakville) has played very well most of the time,” said Clauss. “We’ve had **Kylie Schweiss** (Rockwood Summit) out with injuries - she just came back last week and really is having a bit of timing difficulty getting her timing down. **Sarah Hatton** (Northwest) had a very strong first part of the year, especially jump serving. **Emi Gardner’s** (Lindbergh) come in and helped out a little bit.”

Coleman has definitely been all over the floor, averaging 6.4 digs per game, ranking her eleventh best in the nation among Juco Div. II teams. Setting has also been a strength, thanks to freshman **Sarah Greenlee** (Herculaneum.) She leads the team in assists with an average of 7.78 per game, and a total of 389 assists.

“She’s done much better than expected,” said Clauss. “There’s certain games she’s had difficulties depending on how the referees call ball handling. If the referees allow them to play a little bit, she has her confidence and just has some awesome games. The last couple games we played the referees called a very tight game and she’s lost her confidence and is not as aggressive and it affects her overall play.”

One positive effect on the team has been a pair of new assistant coaches. **Kandice Berkel** and **Sara Templeton** played for the Magic just a year ago, and now that their junior college playing days are over, they’re sharing their experience with newer players.

“Sara Templeton has run all of our conditioning and has been a tremendous asset,” said Clauss. “That’s one of the reasons we did so well against East Central - she had them in shape. Kandice provides the motivation side of it. When she was a player she was our vocal expert - now on the sidelines he’s trying to get everybody else to pick it up a bit.”

The Magic open October in Lebanon, Ill. On Oct. 1 (Monday) taking on Lincoln Land and McKendree JV before hosting the Meramec Tournament Oct. 5-6.

“We just need to come together more as a team and talk and hustle and we can definitely get there, we have the talent,” said Nikki Torno.

Mirikitani To Enter National Wrestling Hall Of Fame

Longtime Magic head wrestling coach **Ron Mirikitani** will be feted on Oct. 6 with induction into the National Wrestling Hall Of Fame in banquet ceremonies at Sunset Hills Country Club.

This marks the eighth hall of fame in a 20 year span that has inducted the legendary Mirikitani, including the USA Wrestling Hall Of Fame and the NJCAA Wrestling Hall Of Fame.

“It’s a great honor because it’s for lifetime achievement,” said Mirikitani, a professor of Physical Education at Meramec. “I’m very honored and humbled - I feel like it’s an affirmation of the job I’ve been doing.”

That job is in its thirty eighth year this fall with 438 dual meet wins - an all-time NJCAA record. He has turned out 50 All-Americans in that span, and guided teams that have qualified for the NJCAA National Tournament 30 times.

8th Annual Scholarship Walk Slated For Oct. 6

The 8th Annual Meramec Magic Scholarship Walk will unfold Saturday morning, Oct. 6 outside the P.E. building at 9:00 a.m.

Patrons may sponsor a participant in the walk, or may sign up for a \$20 fee. Manager of Athletics **Bob Bottger** emphasizes that every dollar the event takes in goes directly into student-athletes' scholarships. Over 95% of Meramec student-athletes come directly from the immediate Greater St. Louis area.

Sign-up forms can be obtained by calling Diane Keith at 314-984-7398.