

Shocking End to Longwood Women's Soccer Season

Head Coach Todd Dyer already looking forward

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Longwood women's soccer suffered a devastating defeat in the Big South Conference quarterfinal game vs USC Upstate, a team they beat 3-0 on the road in early October. In the quarterfinal match at the Longwood Athletic complex, USC Upstate won a defensive battle edging out Longwood on a penalty kick. The penalty kick was granted after Abbie Ellis fell to the ground after some contact with back-to-back Big South Defensive Player of the Year Sydney Wallace.

Reflecting on the loss to USC Upstate Head Coach Todd Dyer said, "Bottom line is we didn't play hard enough. We didn't compete, and we always tell the girls you have to earn the right to win first and then go play soccer."

With the loss to USC Upstate, Longwood ended their season with an 8-7-3 record. Longwood struggled during the first half of the season, going 2-5-3 overall including a 0-1-2 start to conference play. The team then caught fire going 6-1 to end the regular season and finished third in the conference standings.

To regain the chemistry and start winning again, the team started participating in team bonding outside of practice as well as working hard during practice according to senior Sydney Wallace. According to Wallace the team would, "go into our team room and discuss what each player needs to do better, and also read a book [The Power of a Positive Team] and discuss it."

When asked about what challenges his team faced Dyer said, "We were in a lot of tight games, when we needed the smallest of breaks to go our way it worked against us a lot of the times this year. ... I think our inconsistency fed into that a little bit because when it clicked for us I thought we were great." Dyer's team ended ten games this season with the final score being one goal or less.

This season, sophomore Madison Van Dyke suited up as the starting keeper after the departure of one of the best keepers in program history, Maria Kirby. Registering zero minutes last season as a freshman, Van Dyke stepped into the box with her team in front of her. Talking about stepping into the starting role Van Dyke said, "I think for my first time starting, I did really well. I did really well communicating with them [her teammates] because that's the whole point of me being back there."

Going from the backup keeper to the full-time starter was a big change for Van Dyke. Talking about the transition Van Dyke said, "It was pretty tough. It was a very big change, the speed of the game is completely different than what it is in practice versus reality."

Next season, Van Dyke will not just be handed the starting job again according to Dyer. He said there will be four keepers on the roster with two freshmen coming in next season making the starting job more competitive. Dyer believes that having the competition is good for the position and it will help push Van Dyke in the offseason. He is confident Van Dyke will put in the necessary work but reiterated that it will be an open competition and the best keeper will play.

While Van Dyke will come back next year, Dyer is losing seven seniors, five of which started. Dyer said it is going to be tough replacing the talented seniors but expects players like Camryn Conklin and Madison Lockamy to step up after earning playing time this season.

Dyer said, "That sophomore class right now, is a large talented class and as they become upperclassmen you'd like to see them take ownership of certain positions and roles on the team." Dyer said he is expecting ten freshmen players to join the ranks next season to help fill the void left by the seniors.

Dyer and his team are still digesting what happened in the quarterfinal game and aren't sure what their goals are for next year. Dyer said, "As a team, without our seniors already, it's a brand-new team, it's a brand-new dynamic, for the rest of this semester we want to establish some closure of the way our fall season ended and start to look ahead to what we want to achieve this spring."

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