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All-American heads CCC soccer team

By John William Howard
Sports Editor

The interesting thing about soccer is that it's nearly impossible to coach. You can't direct each player's every move like you can when playing chess. You don't call plays and you can't rehearse for every situation. Soccer is about learning to improvise based off your set of skills that you develop in practice. If you watch the way the women's soccer team at Clackamas Community College plays, you can see that they're beginning to get it.

That progress is at the hands of the new soccer coach this fall, Janine Szpara and sure hands, at that. Szpara steps into the position with years of experience as a goalkeeper and coach in the professional and college ranks, giving her a confident, controlled air and a steely look that clearly says "go ahead, try to pull a fast one on me." Her beginnings, however, were much more humble.

"About fourth grade, all my friends were playing and gone, and so I decided to check it out because I had no one to play with," said Szpara with a reminiscent chuckle. "I just started playing, and I've been playing ever since ... I broke my ankle in ninth grade and my coach at the time said, 'Well, we'll put you in goal so we can rest you and still play' and [I] basically never got out [of the goal again]."

Szpara's goalkeeping abilities soon lifted her to the collegiate level and she found herself the starting goalie at Colorado College in Colorado Springs, Colo. for the 1985 season.

"It's just a simple little field. [With] Pikes peak in the background it's absolutely beautiful," Szpara remembered. "I was a little bit nervous starting to play but as a freshman you're too dumb to realize what you're doing, so you're pretty cocky and confident and you think you're really good. A little nervous is okay."

Even though her nerves got the best of her in her first game and she let in an easy goal, Szpara's performance as a freshman earned her NCAA Division I first team All-American honors, her first of four during the next four years at Colorado. She became one of only two athletes in school history to achieve that status over four consecutive seasons and led her team to the 1986 NCAA final, falling to soccer powerhouse North Carolina 2-0.

In the summers of '86 and '87, Szpara received the call from the then recently formed US women's national team and played both seasons, earning six starts. Since its start in 1985, the team had improved performance and began to gain traction, but struggled to garner national attention.

"It was a great experience, but in the infancy of the program we were training on elementary school fields," said Szpara. "It was not as organized and as well cared for as it is now. So like any program when it's young, the facilities aren't really great and you're traveling to random places ... I think it was a rented city bus or something that took us to practice. It was a pretty funny scene."

Run down facilities and rented busses aside, Szpara still felt the weight of the position that she was in, traveling to Italy and China to represent her country.

"It's your national team, so you take it seriously and you understand the difference in level," said Szpara, who remained in the National Team pool from 1988-1991. "There's either more pressure or more desire to rise to that level and be good

enough to play there and stay there. It's a whole different set of expectations that you have to face."

After finishing a hall of fame career at Colorado, Szpara found continued success as a coach at Stanford and California before turning pro and leaving for Japan in 1995, eventually returning to the United States to continue coaching all over the West Coast. Szpara spent time at Cornell, Santa Clara and San Jose universities before coming to Portland State as the defensive coordinator in 2008.

"I think that [the players] drew off of her experience immensely," said Laura Schott, head women's soccer coach at Portland State. "If you have somebody on your staff with that kind of experience and can share it with your athletes, it's a good situation. I think she taught them a lot and did a very good job with our athletes," she continued. "I think that she has probably about as much knowledge of the game as anybody."

Szpara attributes part of her success in coaching to the position she played, but also the good coaching that she experienced as a player.

"I felt like I watched a lot of soccer games," said Szpara. "When I tried to explain it to others [I had] a little bit easier [time] than some people have. My coaches were so good I felt like my knowledge base was pretty solid, so I was able to then relate that and share it with the people I was trying to coach."

This spring, Szpara was named the head coach of

the Portland Rain, a Women's Premier Soccer League team with ties to the Olympic Development Program. It was when Szpara called then Clackamas head coach Tracy Neilson about players for the Rain that she learned the position would be opened once Neilson left on sabbatical. While at Clackamas, Szpara will continue coaching duties with the Rain as well as becoming the Director of Coaching for the Oregon City Soccer Club.

She's a season ticket holder with the Portland Timbers, follows the US Women's National Team and says that over the last 20 years she's become more and more a fan of soccer in general.

"It became my favorite sport," she said.



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Head Coach Janine Szpara stands with Clackamas' goalie Tori Wilkinson before the game against Yakima on Sept. 15 at Pioneer Stadium in Oregon City.



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Volleyball terms explained

By Matt Senn
The Clackamas Print

You're sitting in the gymnasium taking in a volleyball game when you hear the coach shout "Come on, girls! Dig it out!" At this point, you may have to ask yourself what the heck they're digging for and where they plan on putting the dirt. Volleyball, much like other sports, is full of obscure terms and phrases that, unless you have been around the sport a lot, you will have no idea what they mean. With the volleyball season up and running, it may be time for you to brush up on your lingo. Here are a few terms to help get you started:

Dig — the act of passing a rapidly hit or spiked ball to another player on your team. Often this results in the player falling to the ground as they throw themselves at the ball.

Libero — often the best passer on the team. They are responsible for a great deal of the passing and digging. They also are the only players

Campfire (below) — when a ball falls to the floor in an area surrounded by two, three, four or more players. For a moment it seems as if the players are encircling the point where the ball hit and watching a campfire. This is often followed by a group version of "Kumbaya."



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Stuff (below) — a ball that is deflected back to the attacking teams' floor by one of the opposing teams' blockers. Example: "They just got stuffed like a Thanksgiving turkey!"



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Ace (below) — when a serve from the offensive team hits the ground on the defensive side of the net without any opposing players able to make an effective pass resulting in immediate points for the serving team; also known as an epic failure by the defense.



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Hopefully this will help you understand a little of what is going on in the fast paced game of volleyball. If nothing else, you can at least use these terms to pretend that you really know what you're talking about.