

COLLEGE SOCCER

WOU soccer faces steep challenge

Wolves hope to bounce back from disappointing 2015 with a return to GNAC tourney

By Lukas Eggen
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — Throughout his tenure, Western Oregon soccer coach Steve Ancheta has experienced just how difficult it can be to build a program in the Great Northwest Athletic Conference.

During his five seasons, he's led the Wolves to the conference tournament twice, advancing to the semifinals in 2013.

But the Wolves finished 8-8-1 overall and 4-7-1 in GNAC play in 2015, missing the GNAC tournament for the second year in a row.

"We have to work hard and push to challenge those top teams," Ancheta said. "There's no slouch in our league. There's no room to take a day off."

WOU is out to stop that trend — though it won't be easy.

Western Oregon will need to find new scoring options after losing its top two goal scorers — who were responsible for 11 of the team's 25 goals — from a season ago to graduation.

The Wolves will rely on a group of returning seniors to pick up the slack.

"I like my core group of seniors coming back that have been around me for a long time," Ancheta said. "They're setting the



Western Oregon senior Taylor Higa will help lead the Wolves' midfielders during the 2016 season.

LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer file

tone early and we're excited to get out there."

Seniors Taylor Higa, Dani Payne and Mariah Konyyn will anchor the midfield with Savannah Bogan assisting on the attack.

Senior midfielder Dani Payne

and defender Allison Sprecher will also play a key role for the Wolves.

"They are some quality girls who will have some opportunities to play some minutes for us," Ancheta said.

With a little over two weeks from

the start of official practices on Monday until the team's first match on Sept. 1, the challenge is greater than simply adjusting to new team roles or bringing along new faces on the field.

Just as important is developing

WOU Soccer

Head coach: Steve Ancheta (sixth season).

2015 record: 8-8-1 overall; 4-7-1 Great Northwest Athletic Conference.

Key returners: Taylor Higa, sr., forward/midfield; Dani Payne, sr., midfielder; Savannah Bogan, sr., forward; Mariah Konyyn, sr., midfielder; Allison Sprecher, sr., defense.

Significant stat: 25 — The number of goals the Wolves scored during the 2015 season.

the relationships between players — no easy task given the short period of time before matches begin.

"We have to make sure we're all on the same page," Ancheta said. "You can't just focus on the soccer ball. We have to work hard and develop that chemistry — that's the big key is having quality team chemistry from the get go."

Finding that chemistry could be the difference between a return to the conference tournament and another season of going home early.

"We're going to put out a good product," Ancheta said. "We have athletes who love to work and feel good about the jersey they're putting on. We'll fight every match for what we deserve."

Float: River race course lasts nearly 12 miles

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Woolsey and Stilligan had their curiosity piqued after seeing fliers during Summerfest.

The pair was looking forward to a relaxing trek down

the Willamette River.

"I don't care if we come in dead last," Stilligan said. "It's just about having fun."

John and Kathleen Hill, of Salem, also took part in the race for the first time. The

couple moved from Florida 19 years ago.

"Being from Florida, the river has intimidated us," Kathleen said. "In Florida, we had swamps and alligators. This one has fast water and

Mother Nature. I'll take an alligator over the current, but we figured we'd be safer with a group, and you're out here with a lot of cool people."

The race, organized by the Networking Exchange Club

of Salem, began in the 1970s.

Since then, it's become a tradition for many to enjoy an afternoon out on the water.

Despite the name, it's not all about who finishes first

— it's more about floating away on a summer day.

"It's so easy to get people out," Litke said. "You just need a tube and you can float around. It's perfect for the summer."

Ready for some football



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Dallas high school football players practice on Tuesday morning. Official practices began on Monday for the fall sports season. The Dragons open the 2016 season at home on Sept. 2 against Parkrose.



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Participants worked hard to make their crafts unique on Saturday morning.



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

The Great Willamette Raft Race attracts participants from all over Oregon.

West Valley Housing Authority will hold their Work Session Meeting on Wednesday, August 24, 2016 beginning at 11:30 a.m. at 204 SW Walnut in Dallas, Oregon. The Regular Meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 24, 2016 at 1:00 p.m. at 204 SW Walnut in Dallas, Oregon. An Executive Session pursuant to ORS 192.660 will be held immediately following the Regular Meeting, if required.

Agenda for the meeting is posted on the Housing Authority website at www.wvpha.org. The location for the meeting is handicapped accessible. Please advise the West Valley Housing Authority if you need any special accommodations to attend the meeting. For information, please call 503-623-8387, TDD 1-800-735-2900.



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