



Wittenberg Women's Soccer 2000 Season in Review

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SETTING THE SCENE: The Wittenberg University women's soccer team enjoyed one of the best seasons in its history, finishing the 2000 campaign with a 10-7 record. It was the team's first winning season since 1995, when the Tigers posted the best mark in school history at 15-3.

The Tigers opened the 2000 season with seven wins in their first eight games before hitting a rough spot against the top competition in the North Coast Athletic Conference in mid-season. Wittenberg recovered, however, and made a terrific season-ending run, closing with three wins in its final four outings to forge a three-way tie for fourth place in the NCAC standings and earn a berth in the first-ever conference tournament based on tiebreaker criteria.

The Tigers, who were 4-4 in the NCAC and tied with Kenyon and Wooster for the fourth and final tourney spot, concluded the campaign with a hard-fought 2-0 loss to No. 1 seeded Allegheny in the first round of the NCAC tournament. It was only the third time all season that Wittenberg had been held scoreless in a game.

The loss did little to put a damper on the season, however. The 2000 season included a variety of individual and team accomplishments that may well lay the groundwork for the program's bright future.

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YOUTH MOVEMENT: While Wittenberg came up short against Allegheny, second-year Head Coach Fran Kulas knows that his program is on the rise. Stocked with young talent, the Tigers enjoyed a banner season in 2000 and the 15 freshman on the roster at season's end know the possibilities are endless.

Among the team's 11 players with the most starts in 2000, only two will not be back with the team next year due to graduation. Three of the team's top four scorers and its top two goaltenders, all freshmen, will return next year as Wittenberg makes another run at breaking into the top of the NCAC, one of the best and deepest women's soccer conferences in the country.

The roster's 15 freshmen were **Katie Fairhurst** (*Blue Ash, Ohio/Sycamore*), **Jen Biehl** (*Swanton, Ohio/Swanton*), **Jenny Miller** (*Cincinnati, Ohio/Mother of Mercy*), **Cristin Gill** (*Loveland, Ohio/Loveland*), **Allison Spansky** (*Munroe Falls, Ohio/Stow*), **Stephanie Skufca** (*Loveland, Ohio/Summit Country Day*), **Jessica Shellhouse** (*London, Ohio/London*), **Jill Rekers** (*Springboro, Ohio/Springboro*), **Erin Lane** (*Lucas, Ohio/Mansfield St. Peter's*), **Melissa Jordan** (*Cincinnati, Ohio/Finneytown*), **Jenny King** (*Cincinnati, Ohio/Wyoming*), **Alison Smock** (*Glendale, Ariz./Ironwood*), **Geri Woessner** (*Dayton, Ohio/Oakwood*), **Kate Williston** (*Wooster, Ohio/*

Wooster) and **Lesley Runyan** (*Ashland, Ohio/Ashland*).

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SAYING GOOD-BYE: Two seniors who have meant a great deal to the Wittenberg program will be moving on this spring following graduation.

First, defensive back **Shana Ryan** (*London, Ohio/London*) will depart as one of the most decorated players in school history after earning All-NCAC honors for a fourth straight year in 2000. Not only was Ryan a quality player for four years, but she was amazingly versatile. After two years as one of the team's top scorers, Ryan moved to the defensive end of the field and spearheaded an effort that held four 2000 opponents without a goal and five others to just a lone score.

Midfielder **Natalie Estep** (*Fairborn, Ohio/Fairborn*) completed her career after her finest season as a collegian. Estep ranked second on the team with 10 goals, six assists and 26 total points a year after topping the team with six goals, two assists and 14 total points in 1999.

Both players' departure will create voids that the Tigers will be hard-pressed to fill adequately in 2001. A key to the team's success next year could largely depend upon their ability to do just that.

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RECORD-SETTER: Most freshman simply hope to fit in with their new team. Forward **Geri Woessner** did more than just fit in with the Wittenberg Tigers in 2000 — she made herself right at home.

Woessner, who also has taken on a starring role with the Wittenberg women's basketball team in her first season as a collegian, led the offensive-minded Tigers with 18 goals, seven assists and 43 total points in 2000. The goals and total points figures also topped the NCAC, as did her 2.53 points per game average.

But that's just the beginning. Woessner ranked 13th in the nation among NCAA Division III players in points per game as late as Oct. 1. And Woessner, who started 15 of the team's 17 games, tied school records with 18 goals in a season and four goals in the season-opener against Urbana University. She also wound up second in Wittenberg history with 43 points in a season and seven assists in a season.

For her efforts, Woessner claimed NCAC Newcomer of the Year and first-team All-Great Lakes Regional All-American honors, in addition to making first-team All-NCAC. Those honors followed an NCAC Player of the Week designation for the week of Sept. 17.

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TEAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Wittenberg was ranked most of the season among the top-10 in

the Great Lakes Region, and the Tigers finished the year ranked eighth in a poll of NCAA Division III and NAIA teams in the state of Ohio by the Ohio Soccer Coaches Association.

The 2000 squad scored the second-most goals (55) and total points (148) in a season in school history. At their highest point, Wittenberg also stood eighth nationally in NCAA Division III in team scoring offense (4.67 goals for game on Oct. 1). The Tigers also tied an all-time school record with 11 goals in a lop-sided victory over Urbana on Sept. 1.

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ALL-NCAC: **Shana Ryan** and **Geri Woessner** both earned first-team honors. **Natalie Estep** was named second-team. Junior midfielder **Emily Gersbach** (*Hamilton, Ohio/Badin*), who topped the team with seven assists (second-most in school history) and freshman forward **Jill Rekers** (*Springboro, Ohio/Springboro*), who tied for second on the team with 10 goals in the 2000 season, each received honorable mention recognition.

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THE COACH: **Fran Kulas** ends his second year guiding the Tigers with a 17-18-1 overall record. The 17 wins already rank him in a tie for third among Wittenberg coaches in the 15-year history of the program. Sheilah Lingenfelter compiled a 36-35-3 record from 1990-93, Mary Romestant posted a mark of 22-33-4 between 1996-98 and Diana Daniels finished 17-16-1 from 1988-89.

Tentative 2001 Wittenberg Women's Soccer Schedule

Aug. 25	Tiffin (preseason)	1 p.m.
Aug. 29	Otterbein (preseason)	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 1	@ Mt. St. Joseph's	7 p.m.
Sept. 5	@ Wilmington	7 p.m.
Sept. 8	Rose Hulman	1 p.m.
Sept. 9	DePauw	1 p.m.
Sept. 12	@ Heidelberg	5 p.m.
Sept. 15	Transylvania	1 p.m.
Sept. 19	@ Ohio Wesleyan	7 p.m.
Sept. 22	@ Elmhurst (IL)	4 p.m. (EDT)
Sept. 26	@ Earlham	4 p.m. (EDT)
Sept. 29	@ Kenyon	1 p.m.
Oct. 3	Denison	4 p.m.
Oct. 6	@ Oberlin	2 p.m.
Oct. 9	Wooster	4 p.m.
Oct. 13	Allegheny	11 a.m.
Oct. 16	@ Cedarville	4 p.m.
Oct. 20	Hiram	Noon
Oct. 24	NCAC Semifinals	TBA
Oct. 27	NCAC Finals	TBA
Oct. 31	NCAA Tournament	TBA