Volleyball, 2B.

Soccer, 5B.

Football, 8B.

SPORTS
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Photo by Nick Faulkner

Lady Braves' senior Faye Corbett tries to maneuver around two Mount Olive players earlier this season. Corbett has two goals and five assists in UNCP's 8-1-1 start.

By Nick Phillips
Sports Editor

Three seasons ago, the Lady Braves soccer team began its season with five consecutive wins before finishing with a 12-6-1 record.

Two seasons ago, the UNCP women's soccer team opened its season with seven straight wins en route to a NCAA Tournament appearance and a 19-3-1 record.

Last season, the Lady Braves started 5-1 before finishing with a 10-8-1 record.

Sense a trend?

The Lady Braves know how to start a season.

"I think our fast starts can be attributed to the fact that we stress the importance of off-season training. Players are sent a summer program and know that they will go through a number of fitness tests when they return for pre-season camp," UNCP head coach Lars Andersson said.

"There are no shortcuts to success," he emphasized.

"In addition, I think we have found a good balance between training and recovery," Andersson added.

"The college soccer season is very short and intense and you must know when to train and when to rest to allow your players to perform at their peak at all times," he finished.

This season's version of the Lady Braves has started the season 8-1-1 after defeating Peach Belt Conference foe Clayton State on Oct. 2 at Varsity Grounds.

Add in the fact that freshman goalkeeper Brittany Bennett has only allowed four goals in 785 minutes of action, and that the Lady Braves 0-0 tie came against regional rival Wingate in a double overtime matchup that went 110 minutes, and it equals out to show that UNCP and Andersson have another good team on their hands.

Against Clayton State, the Lady Braves tallied double the shot attempts with 24 and totaled eight corner kicks while Bennett finished with seven saves for UNCP's fourth shutout of the season and fifth win in a row.

Take Five

"We remained faithful to the game plan and were patient on offense and attentive on defense for us to capture this needed conference win," Andersson said.

Sophomore Brittany Padilla placed UNCP on the scoreboard first in the 30th minute.

Originally, Padilla's shot appeared to be stopped by Clayton State goalie Steania Cola, but was ruled a goal as Cola stepped backwards into the goal and the ball crossed the plane of the goal line.

At the 48:43 mark, junior Rebecca Womack blasted a ball past Cola to up the Lady Braves' lead to 2-0 off an assist from senior Faye Corbett and sophomore Andrea Collen. Collen also picked up an assist on Padilla's goal earlier in the game.

Six minutes after Womack's tally, UNCP freshman Anna Zetterlund found herself in the same situation, beating Cola for the Lady Braves' third goal of the contest as Corbett and Collen each picked up their second assists of the afternoon.

Clayton State's Cherie Sayon, who came into the game with eight goals in six games, was shut down by UNCP freshman Kayla Colon throughout the game.

"Kayla did an outstanding job with her task of eliminating any chance that Sayon could become the deciding factor in the game," Andersson said of Colon.

The Lady Braves improve to 8-1-1 overall record with the win.

They head out on the road for their next two contests, first against USC Aiken on Oct. 6 before traveling to take on Georgia Southernwestern on Oct 9.

"We play two more conference games on the road with an opportunity to take two wins if we stay focused and take it one game at a time," Andersson said.

UNCP's 0.674 goals against average is the 15th best in the country, while Bennett has the 18th ranked goalkeeper in the country in the Goals Against Average category.

The Lady Braves currently sit in fourth place in the PBC standings, with Armstrong Atlantic, North Georgia and Columbus State all unbeaten in PBC play.

Winning streak improves to five