Lady Braves’ soccer dominates 2008 season

By Matt Smith
Sports Editor

To call the 2008 women’s soccer season a “success” would be a disservice to the women who played this season.

A team that breaks multiple school records, finishes the season 16 games above .500 and earns the school’s first ever NCAA tournament win is not just successful, they are extraordinary.

The Lady Braves dominated all but two opponents this year, finishing the season 19-3-1, leaving in their wake 14 shutouts while holding onto a top 10 national ranking for much of the season.

“In retrospect it’s obviously been an outstanding season,” head coach Lars Andersson said. “We set numerous team records and school records and it’s been an outstanding season.

“Clearly it’s been the finest season in the history of the program and I’d like to think that there are greater things to come.”

Early dominance
The Lady Braves dominated in their first seven regular season matches, posting a perfect 7-0 record with five recorded shutouts by senior goalkeeper Whitney Beverly.

The Lady Braves picked up road wins over St. Andrews, Pfeiffer and Queens, outscoring their three opponents 9-0 away from Varsity Grounds.

At home, the Lady Braves carried the same championship demeanor, taking down Limestone, Lenior-Rhyne, Wingate and Georgia College.

The Lady Braves posted a 10-2 scoring record at home, holding both Georgia College and Limestone scoreless.

Senior forward Melanie Cobb started her offensive record-breaking season off right, with two goals against the St. Andrews’ Lady Knights in the Lady Braves’ opening game.

Cobb would end up scoring three more goals in the early season on her way to her school scoring record of 19 goals in a season.

Senior Nisa Aikens led the Lady Braves with four assists during the first seven games, as Cobb led the team with 14 total points.

The Lady Braves mid-season run would prove what Coach Andersson’s squad was made of.

With conference play right around the corner, the Lady Braves would get their first conference test of the season.

Mid-season swoon
With their first conference road test on Sept. 24 at Armstrong Atlantic, the No. 6 ranked Lady Braves suffered their first setback of the season with a 0-0 tie against the Lady Pirates.

Armstrong Atlantic held the Lady Braves to just 18 shots over 90 minutes of regulation and two overtime periods.

The Lady Braves had no time to sulk however, as the No. 12 ranked Columbus State Cougars came into Varsity Grounds looking to spoil the Lady Braves’ dreams of a conference title.

The Lady Braves and the Cougars went into intermission with a 1-1 lead off Faye Corbett’s third goal of the season, but the Lady Braves couldn’t hold on for the win as Columbus State’s offense scored two second half goals to take the game over.

Although down, the Lady Braves rattled off six straight wins from Oct. 1 to Oct. 22, demolishing Catawba, Clayton State, Erskine, Lander, North Georgia and Barton.

The Lady Braves outscored their opponents 20-6 during their mid-season win streak, including two impressive 5-0 wins at Erskine and at home against Barton.

Cobb continued to lead the Lady Braves offensively, scoring the school’s first hat trick in the 5-0 win against Barton for her 10th, 11th and 12th goals of the season.

Beverly again had five more shutouts, just one shy of tying the school record of 11.

The Lady Braves would move into the final third of the season with an impressive 13-1-1 record, with conference championship