

Direct from Maryland: the Anne Arundel soccer sisterhood

By Colleen Gonzalez
STAFF WRITER

As the soccer season ended at the Old Dominion Athletic Conference Tournament, the Guilford College women's soccer team had much to be proud of for what they accomplished this season. The team compiled a total of 10 wins, eight losses, and two draws, their best season since 2006.

Four girls in particular, Rachel Harman, Amy Baker, Katie Oliver and Jaclyn Nucci, have contributed to the team's success. They each attended Anne Arundel Community College in Maryland and have used their skills and familiarity with each other as an advantage in games.

"We had a really good program at Anne Arundel," said senior defensive player Harman. "It's really intense and I think a lot of people underestimate community colleges for sports, but it really prepared us a lot."

Many players that have graduated from Guilford previously attended and played for AACC before transferring in their junior year. In an email interview, Anne Arundel soccer coach Jim Griffiths explains just how many girls have gone on to Guilford.

"I believe that counting this year's players, eight athletes have made the jump from AACC to Guilford since 2007," said Griffiths.

"There's been a long relationship between the coaches at Anne Arundel and myself," said Head Coach Eric Lewis.

Before accepting the coaching position at Guilford, Lewis worked at Lewisburg College in Raleigh as head soccer coach. During his time at Lewisburg, the relationship with AACC began.

"We started playing Anne Arundel during his (Griffiths')

first year in Maryland," said Lewis. "We used to go there a lot, and we just stayed in contact."

Lewis' experience as a junior college coach gave him an understanding about how to choose players who have decided to transfer after their time at community college.

"You have to be careful whenever you get a large number of transfers and know what kind of kids you're getting," Lewis said.

"It's really intense and I think a lot of people underestimate community colleges for sports, but it really prepared us a lot."

Rachel Harman, senior defensive player

Three of the four Quaker players are seniors this year and entered Guilford together.

"I've known Amy Baker since we were like 10 or 11 and I played against Katie (Oliver) and Jaclyn (Nucci) in high school, but I didn't get to know them until Guilford," said Harman.

Equipped with the knowledge of each player's approach, it has given them a sense of confidence and comfort for when they are on the field.

"I trusted Amy as my goalie more and I trusted Rachel

because she played defense more," said Oliver. "And I know the way Jackie plays so I knew she was going to be a key player in the middle and it made me feel more comfortable about playing my position."

Not only is the trust within the girls themselves, but their experience playing at Anne Arundel prepared them for the transition from junior college athletics to a Division III collegiate school.

"The coach at AACC is really tough," said senior goalkeeper Amy Baker. "He is like a Division II, Division I coach, like really tough on you and wants you to do your best. I feel like I came in really prepared."

"Community college is definitely a step up from high school, so you get that level of experience," said Nucci. "And coming in as a junior has you a lot more prepared; you know what to expect."

Although three of the four Quakers will be graduating this year, it is safe to assume this is not the end of the AACC sisterhood. Recruits have already visited Guilford from AACC and because one veteran will still be here, they will most likely have a comfortable transition.

"It's a sense of home while you're here," said Nucci.

The women's soccer team had an amazing season, due to all of their players and the four AACC girls used their brilliant dynamic to help push the team to the top. Although it is the end of the line for some of the girls, other future Anne Arundel players may have the same amount of success should they decide to attend Guilford.

"I think that all of the girls that have come from AACC to Guilford are all very driven both academically and athletically," said Griffiths. "The experiences that they have at both schools have prepared them for life after college and how to be successful in whatever field they choose."



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