

The Daily Tar Heel

Soccer team returns to semis

BY LOUIE HORVATH

Coach Anson Dorrance and the North Carolina women's soccer team hopes 2008 ends more gracefully than their last season did.

Last year ended with a disap-pointing loss at home against Notre Dame in the third round of the NCAA Tournament - well short of the annual goal of a national championship.

This year's edition already has surpassed last year, in reaching the program's 24th College Cup in 27 years, after a strong showing in the regular season.

We're going to go down swinging and we're going to do every-thing we can because we are a hell of a team," Junior Whitney Engen said.

Bolstered by new faces, the Tar Heel attack scored goals by the bunches, eclipsing last year's 2.28 goals per game mark with a robust 3.31 goals per game rate this season.

Freshman Courtney Jones was the Tar Heels' second leading point scorer, behind nationally-acclaimed striker Casey Nogueira. Jones tallied a total of 13 goals

in her first collegiate season, but was still ten goals behind the pro-lific foot of Nogueira, who found the back of the net a team-high 23 times.

The Tar Heels faced a brutal regular season slate, featuring nine games against teams that finished the year ranked in NSCAA's final Top 25 poll, including undefeated and untied No. 1 Notre Dame.

After the Santa Clara game (their eighth game of the season), Dorrance said in a phone inter-view, "I do not think there is a collegiate schedule out there in our sport that is that aggressive," he said. "We're pretty pleased with the caliber of the competition that we've had."

In those games, the Tar Heels went 7-1-1, with their only loss coming at the hands of the Fighting

The biggest cosmetic change for the Tar Heels this season was found on the back line, as Dorrance's squad graduated two of the three players who started on defense. Gone are Ariel Harris and Jessica Maxwell - in are Whitney Engen and Rachel Givan.

"Let's face it, we've got a great back three, and who would have known a year ago that this would be our back three?" Dorrance said after the Tar Heels took their second round match-up against the 49ers of Charlotte.

"They've done a tremendous job. That's the sixth shutout in a row, so we're on a roll, and I'm very excited about the way we're playing right now

The result of moving Engen - who played forward in 2008 - to the backline has been more tangible during the season's home stretch. In the previous eight games, UNC has allowed only one goal.

For the season, North Carolina

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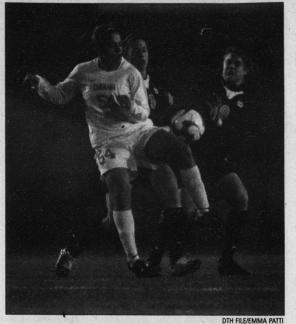
has allowed only 15 goals total,

while scoring 86. And while much of that credit must go to a backline that features the intense effort of Engen, a nod must be given to the infusion of talent and experience in the attack-ing unit. Nogueira has blossomed in her sophomore year, and the addition of Jones and fellow freshmen Merritt Mathias and Emilie Pfankuch have energized the Tar Heel attack.

The results have been an increase in offense as a whole – try 576 shots for North Carolina and 92 assists compared to 473 shots and just 49 assists in 2007-2008

The results of the upcoming College Cup will decide the success or failure of the team. All four No. 1 seeds advanced to the College Cup, which begins on Friday and will be held in Cary this year.

> Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.



Casey Nogueira led UNC with 54 points on the year. Noguiera has 23 goals in her 26th game this year, 10 goals more than the next Tar Heel player.

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PITTSBORO. UNC students to watch our 2 year-old in our home, 9am-noon, December year-old in our nome, sam-noon, pecentoer 11,16-19 and in January, Spring. 10 miles south of UNC hospital. \$10/hr. 942-4527.

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Announcements

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Announcements

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http://www.epa.gov/oamrtpnc/q0900017/index.htm (solicitation closes Dec. 5, 2008)-http://www.epa.gov/oamrtpnc/q0900027/index.htm (solicitation closes Dec. 14, 2008) For additional assistance call Jo Ann at 919-966-6204.

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