Field hockey headed to NE10 tournament



PHOTOS | WADE BARILLARO

Midfielder Ruby Webb, a junior, lifts the ball into the air during a game against Saint Anselm College on Oct. 18.

By Julian Markese
Sports Editor

For the first time since 2013, the field hockey team will get the chance to play a postseason game. The Owls beat Franklin Pierce University on Saturday, Nov. 1 at Jess Dow Field 4–2 to secure the No. 7 seed.

It was senior day, and each senior celebrated by finding their way on to the stat sheet. They will have a chance to play at least one more game as a reward for their lifelong dedication to the sport.

"This is the first year we've had the personnel to make this happen," Head Coach Kelley Frassinelli said. "We were building it last year. That was the foundation; this was the team that was going to be able to break through."

And break through they have. Their six conference wins are as many as the team has had since 2010. They have found success in large part thanks to their senior leadership and togetherness.

"This team has put in the work this year. We're trusting each other. We're talking to each other, communicating and working for each other," midfielder Taylor Leckey, a senior, said. "So, I think we deserve that extra game."

Leckey has been the star of the team all season. She had an assist against Franklin Pierce, bringing her season total to nine, which led the team. Leckey also led the team in goals and defensive stops.

"She's just been an incredible player for us," Frassinelli said. "She just outsmarts the players that she's playing against."

Leckey transferred from Middlebury College, where she won two NCAA Championships. She has been a pivotal difference maker for the Owls in her two seasons serving in the heart of the midfield.

Her fellow captain, forward Natalia Fiato, a senior, also contributed an assist in her final home game.

"Nat plays with high speed, gets us into spaces on the attacking side, and she has the awareness to shoot inside the circle," Frassinelli said.

Fiato has used that awareness to tally six goals this season and 12 in her career with the team. She is a versatile player who has played both forward and midfield for the Owls. With three seasons on the field for the university, Fiato is the longest tenured of the three seniors.

"It's bittersweet," Fiato said. "I've been playing my whole life, and to see it end is sad. But I'm very grateful for my team and grateful that the only time I've made the postseason is my last season."

Fiato shared the same sentiment as defender McKenzie Fairfax, a senior. Fairfax transferred from Saint Joseph's College of Maine, leading the Owls in defensive saves last season.

"I wanted a different level of play, and this is what I got," Fairfax said. "When I came, they welcomed me with open arms, and from there, my skills grew."

Fairfax translated those skills into the best reward possible against Franklin Pierce: a goal. It was the first of her Owls career and excited the home crowd as such.

"She's our sniper," Frassinelli said. "She is always controlled, patient and always comes up with the ball. Her skills and what she's been able to do with the ball this year coming out of our defensive end has been instrumental for us."

The team finds itself in unfamiliar territory; but Leckey, Fiato and Fairfax bring a steadying presence to the locker room and a maturity that is necessary at times like these.

"It's more than just field hockey with this group," Fairfax said. "You go through ups and downs in every game and practice, so you have to have a grateful outlook."

As grateful as they may be to play another game, the team has set their sights even higher.

"I don't see it ending on Tuesday. I'm really hopeful we can keep going," Fiato said. "Just because we're the lower seed, that doesn't mean anything. I think we want it more than any other team in the conference."

The team will travel to face Adelphi University in their first round matchup of the NE10 Championship on Tuesday, Nov. 4. They will carry with them the opportunity to improve on an already successful campaign.

"You get into that tournament, and you can take anything on any given day," Frassinelli said. "We have a lot more to prove, and we want to be able to extend that into the next thing."

Weekly Recap

Football: 3–5 (3–2)

L 38-7 @ Assumption University

Wide receiver Divine Edwards, a senior, scored on the day. Running back Kieran Falzon, a junior, ran for 119.

Next: 11/8 @ Franklin Pierce University, 1 p.m.

Women's soccer: 3–9–3 (1–7–1)

L 2-1 vs. Molloy University

Forward Nicky Deslauriers, a senior, finished the season with three goals and two assists. Goalkeeper Abby Aughe, a senior, finished the season with a 78.7% save percentage. The team will not reach the NE10 tournament.

Men's soccer: 8–4–4 (4–2–3)

L 1-0 vs. Bentley University

The team finished in the top half of the table with 15 points. They will play Adelphi University in the first round of the NE10 tournament. Midfielder Ryad Benmessaoud, a freshman, was NE10 Rookie of the Week last week.

Next: NE10 Quarterfinals

Field hockey: 9–9 (6–6)

W 4-2 vs. Franklin Pierce University

Next: 11/4 @ Adelphi University, 4 p.m.

Volleyball: 14–5 (5–1)

W 3-0 vs. Southern New Hampshire University

Outside hitter Kerrigan Habing, a sophomore, was honored as an NE10 Face in the Crowd last week, for the second time this season.

Next: 11/7 @ American International College, 7 p.m.

Loss adds fuel to fire

By Draven Dabrowski
Sports Writer

The field hockey team battled until the final whistle but came up short, falling 2–1 to Pace University at Jess Dow Field on Oct. 28.

Despite outshooting the Setters 21–9 and dominating corners 16–4, the Owls could not convert on their chances. Their aggressive offensive effort kept Pace on its heels for much of the game, but many missed opportunities around the cage meant the Owls fell short.

"The last two games have been this type of game for us," Head Coach Kelley Frassinelli said. "We just need to capitalize on the corners and the opportunities that we are creating."

Neither side could break through in the first half, as both teams showed solid defensive play that kept the game scoreless.

The Setters were finally able to break free and score in the third quarter. They carried that momentum into the fourth, doubling their lead to 2–0.

The Owls were able to add a goal late in the fourth quarter. Forward Keana Criscuolo, a sophomore, got her second goal of the season when forward Isabella Fölster, a freshman, sent a pass across the circle that Criscuolo buried to cut the deficit to 2–1, giving the Owls life down the stretch.

"I was in the right spot at the right time," Criscuolo said. "We're never completely out of it."

The university continued to pressure Pace in the closing minutes, earning two penalty corners — one of which came with no time left on the clock that could have tied the game.

Goalkeeper Rachel Miller, a junior, finished with five saves in 39 minutes before goalkeeper Lyla O'Connor, a freshman, played the final 20. The backline, led by defender McKenzie Fairfax, a senior, and defender Sofia Frassinelli, a sophomore, held strong to prevent further damage.

Midfielder Taylor Leckey, a senior, emphasized the need for stronger execution despite the team' s offensive pressure.

"I think it was a strong game by us," Leckey said. "We just need to play together throughout the whole game, all four quarters, and finish strong. We're dominating in shots and corners; we just need to finish in the cage."

Even in defeat, the Owls' performance reflected the team's continued growth and resilience as they near the end of their season. The effort and statistical dominance showed signs that the group remains competitive against the rest of the teams in the NE10.

"We know we can compete with anyone," Frassinelli said. "It's just about putting all the pieces together and finishing the chances we create. That's the next step for us."



Defender McKenzie Fairfax, a senior, dribbles against Pace University on Oct. 28.



Forward Natalia Fiato, a senior, makes a play against Pace University on Oct. 28



Midfielder Taylor Leckey, a senior, with the ball on senior day against Pace University on Oct. 28.

More stories:

Men's soccer falls to Bentley University, heads to postseason

For this story, photos and sounds from the games, visit thesouthernnews.org