2010 Review

Trying to replace one of the most successful classes in school history is hard enough. Having to do it with only two seniors and a starting lineup featuring as many as six freshmen and sophomores is just downright daunting.

That was the challenge facing the Muhlenberg women’s soccer team entering the 2010 season. Coming off the fourth trip to the NCAA Tournament in school history, the Mules had to replace seven major contributors lost to graduation. They had their ups and downs but remained in playoff contention until the final week of the season, finishing with a 7-8-2 record.

With so many young players it took a few games to get in sync. After a slow 0-3-2 start, Muhlenberg picked up its first win of the season at McDaniel, 3-0.

After a non-conference loss to Scranton, the Mules split a pair of overtime matchups against teams that would go on to make the Centennial Conference playoffs: a 2-1 win on Meghan O’Grady’s goal in the 91st minute against Haverford and a 1-0 double overtime loss at regular-season champion Dickinson.

Muhlenberg won five of its next six games, starting the successful stretch with a 5-3 win over Moravian followed by a 4-0 win over Washington. After slipping at Swarthmore, Muhlenberg returned to Allentown to face No. 9 Johns Hopkins.

Freshman C.J. Graetzer got the Mules started with a long distance goal in the 19th minute. The Blue Jays then tied it on a penalty kick eight minutes later. But after Johns Hopkins was called for a handball in the box in the 36th minute, junior Nicolette Miller connected on the ensuing penalty kick to put Muhlenberg back in front. The Mules were able to withstand a late Johns Hopkins push to hold on for the 2-1 win, their second straight against a Blue Jay team ranked in the top 10.

Muhlenberg’s streak continued with back-to-back 4-0 wins against Bryn Mawr and Franklin & Marshall.

Miller tied a school record with three assists and added a goal against the Owls. She then netted a hat trick against the Diplomats to finish with 11 points in the two games. O’Grady joined Miller in the record books with a trio of assists against Franklin & Marshall.

Those two wins gave the Mules a perfect home CC record and helped them stay in a tie for second place in the conference with two road games remaining.

But Muhlenberg dropped its final two contests, including a tough 2-1 double-overtime defeat at Ursinus that came on a penalty kick in the 107th minute, to finish in a tie for fourth place in the conference at 6-4 and just miss out on the CC tournament.

Muhlenberg was well represented when it came to postseason awards. For the third straight year at least five Mules received All-CC recognition.

O’Grady was named to the first team after tying for the CC lead in points per game (1.53) with 26 points on 10 goals and 6 assists. With 22 career goals, she will enter her senior season ninth on the Mules’ all-time list.
Miller earned second-team honors for the second straight year after tying O’Grady for the CC lead in points per game. Miller’s 11 goals were good for second in the conference, and she will enter her senior season eighth on the program’s all-time scoring list with 63 career points.

Junior goalie Michele Toher, sophomore back Maggie Neary and Graetzer were honorable mentions.

Toher finished second in the conference with a .875 save percentage in CC play, while Neary started all 17 games for a defense that allowed only 10 goals in 10 conference games. Graetzer was one of only four freshmen to earn all-conference honors and finished third on the squad with 16 points.

Seniors Lauren Petri and Valerie Patriarca played in all 17 games for the Mules, and Patriarca finished her career with 13 goals and 29 points in 51 career games.

Sophomores Alyssa Meola and Jessica Gonzalez and freshmen Stephanie Tramutola and Lizzie Neary also saw time in all 17 games for the Mules, while sophomore Natalie Wizel played in 16 contests.

Sophomore Jillian Moretto started the first nine games before suffering an injury that cost her the rest of the season. And freshman Amanda Wong became only the third player in program history to score a goal as a field player and make a save as a goalie.

With nine returning starters and plenty of experience, the Mules will look to build off of their 2010 performance. And with two of the most prolific scorers in the conference returning, Muhlenberg should be a strong contender in the CC race next fall.