

Georgia Southern University

Digital Commons@Georgia Southern

Athletics News

Athletics

8-18-2021

SEASON PREVIEW: Eagles Ready To Begin Sun Belt Charge Under Adams In 2021

Georgia Southern University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/athletics-news-online>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

This article is brought to you for free and open access by the Athletics at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Athletics News by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu.

Georgia Southern University Athletics



SEASON PREVIEW: Eagles Ready To Begin Sun Belt Charge Under Adams In 2021

New head coach sees challenges, optimism in Georgia Southern's first full campaign under his leadership

Women's Soccer

Posted: 8/18/2021 2:00:00 PM

STATESBORO - When Georgia Southern Head Women's Soccer Coach [Chris Adams](#) got to Statesboro in November of 2020, he knew the task to build the Eagles into a competitive Sun Belt Conference squad was going to be a tough one. Fortunately, the Spring of 2021 afforded a unique opportunity for Coach Adams and the team to get a head start on that process, playing three matches - including two against SEC foes.

Fast forward five months later, where Coach Adams has his first full season at the helm of Eagle women's soccer ahead of him, and the prospects of having the program turn the corner are readily evident coming out of Fall camp.

A focus on defensive consistency, along with a deep midfield and a variety of attacking options up top have the Eagles shooting for a much better outcome than the ninth-place finish the Sun Belt Conference coaches expect based on the 2021 preseason coaches poll.

"Team defending has been a topic that we've spent a tremendous amount of time on," Coach Adams said about his team's preseason preparation. "And what's been the best so far has been the communication. It's picked up dramatically, and in order to defend and get onto the same sheet of music, so to speak, it requires a tremendous amount of talk. The biggest growth so far has been getting them out of their comfort zone, and defending as a group instead of as a bunch of individuals. Making play predictable, getting numbers around the ball, being aggressive in nature by hopefully being able to do some pressing. That results in turning the ball higher up the field, to ultimately create more goal scoring chances."

Coach Adams has the luxury of returning eight starters and 18 players overall from last season's squad, including Preseason All-Sun Belt Conference honoree [Marcela Montoya](#). The season opens up on Thursday, August 19, at the College of Charleston and position-by-position, here's a look at how the Eagles will stack up

in the Fall.

MIDFIELDERS

The Eagles have a wide variety of options in the midfield, and it begins with Montoya (5-5, Grad., Cape Coral, Fla.), who earned first-team All-Sun Belt honors in 2020 with her five goals in the 12-game Fall season. She'll be supplemented by returners such as [Vala Kristin Theodorsdottir](#) (5-7, Sr., Reykjavik, Iceland) and [Nora Falmes](#) (5-6, Sr., Stavanger, Norway). Southern Miss transfer [Olivia Durham](#) (5-8, Sr., Marietta, Ga.) will look to make an impact after three years of action with the Golden Eagles. Fans could see [Marcela Montoya](#) drift back to the midfield as well at times, while returners [Karin Winka](#) (5-5, Jr., Falun, Sweden), [Katie Jebavy](#) (5-7, Soph., Cumming, Ga.), [Sarah Alexander](#) (5-2, Jr., Kennesaw, Ga.) and [Dani Coumbs](#) (5-3, Jr., Warner Robins, Ga.) will battle with true freshman [Smith Cathey](#) (5-8, Fr., Madison, Ga.) for important minutes.

"Our midfield depth creates versatility," Coach Adams said. "We can play a bunch of different people and show different formations. We have great competition in practice every day, and with so many good midfielders, we're getting game-like looks from playing against that competition in practice. Part of that versatility is the option to rob from the midfield and put people up top from time to time to give different looks. And in this day and age with technology, you have to reinvent yourself constantly. You have to adjust and adapt on the fly, which I think we will be very good at this year."

FORWARDS

The options up top for the Eagles in 2021 include returners [Simone Timm](#) (5-5, Soph., Toronto, Ontario) and [Alejandra Gracia](#) (5-5, Jr., Sant Feliu de Llobregat, Spain) as well as a pair of transfers in Memphis transfer [Elis Nemtsov](#) (5-5, R-Fr., Bradford, Ontario) and UAB transfer [Faith Phillips](#) (5-3, Soph., McDonough, Ga.). True freshmen [Grace Brewer](#) (5-3, Fr., Johns Creek, Ga.), [Meghan O'Brien](#) (5-7, Fr., Cincinnati, Ohio) and [Kindree Sullivan](#) (5-7, Fr., Jacksonville Beach, Fla.) will be in the mix along with [Kennedy Jackson](#) (5-0, Soph., Dacula, Ga.) for time as well.

"We have a lot of people we can throw at you," Coach Adams said. "When you press, like would ultimately like to do, you can't do that for long periods of time. When you look at forwards, most often people solely look at the goals on the stat line. But there's a lot of value in having athletic forwards that can turn the ball over and create scoring chances. Quite often, the person that does the dirty work, that presses and wins the ball and wins possession doesn't get rewarded statistically. That's been the power of this group. And when you go six or eight deep, there's not a lot of drop off. It becomes very difficult for opponents' outside backs to deal with our athleticism."

DEFENDERS

The back line for the Eagles has the most returning minutes from last year as a position group, with center backs [Sade Heinrichs](#) (5-9, Soph., Monchengladbach, Germany) and [Megan Przybysz](#) (5-5, R-Jr., Ada, Michigan) along with outside backs [Maddie Klintworth](#) (5-9, 5th, Chatham, Ill.) and [Taylor Regensburger](#) (5-7, Sr., Selden, N.Y.) all logging more than 1,000 minutes of pitch time. Add in two-time junior college national champion transfer [Isabel Kopp](#) (5-3, Jr., Haarlem, The Netherlands) from Tyler JC and the Eagles have the building blocks for a sturdy defensive group. A trio of freshmen - [Savannah Fallaw](#) (5-9, Fr., McDonough, Ga.), [Larsyn Reid](#) (5-10, Fr., Flowery Branch, Ga.) and [Courtney Jebavy](#) (5-6, Fr., Cumming, Ga.) will join [Maya Zovko](#) (5-5, Soph., Waite Hill, Ohio) in helping Coach Adams search for that defensive consistency.

"Consistency has been the issue," Coach Adams said. "Mental lapses, misclearing a ball here or there. At this level, you can make some mistakes, but you can't make big mistakes. Bringing it every single day in practice, you can communicate a little longer, can concentrate and focus a little longer. Doing that for 90 minutes, or even 110 minutes, that's the challenge early in the season. But having a lot of experience on our back line helps, because of that continuity. Having each other's back, when we make those mistakes."

GOALKEEPERS

The Eagles will go into the Fall with a pair of goalkeepers looking to aid the back line in creating those measures of success - the goals against average and the shutouts. Returner [Sallie Newton](#) (5-8, Sr., Wilmington, N.C.) started all three matches in the Spring of 2021, tying a school record with 16 saves at Florida. Incoming true freshman [Michaela English](#) (5-9, Fr., Dacula, Ga.) will have plenty of opportunity for not only early action in net, but throughout the season as Coach Adams tries to keep both of his keepers fresh in the long grind of the campaign.

"Sallie played in some tough matches in the Spring," Coach Adams said. "And that in-game experience has prepared her. We also have an ultra-athletic freshman in Michaela, who is capable of making some big saves. Two different looks, and some of our games may require a different recipe. Right now, there's good competition between those two, and we need that depth to get through a season."

FINAL OUTLOOK

The 19-game schedule for the Eagles features the rigorous Sun Belt slate, plus non-conference contests against No. 23 Ole Miss, former SoCon rivals Davidson, The Citadel and in-state rival Mercer. [Check out the Georgia Southern Marketing and Promotional Schedule for the Eagles' seven home matches at Erk Park this year here.](#) Coach Adams is confident that the Eagles will show well in his first full season with the squad.

"I typically go through the schedule and forecast our wins and losses," Coach Adams said. "I have not done that yet, but early on, I think it's more important for us to focus on being the best version of ourselves. I don't know where that will leave us record-wise, what's in that crystal ball. But there's no reason that once we get out there, and get some momentum and confidence, that we can't string together multiple wins and be a player in the conference."

"I believe the top three in this league have separated themselves," Coach Adams said. "If we can get into that 4-5 range, and earn a bye in the first round of the Sun Belt tournament, that would be a really good season in my mind. I also think, where we are coming from in getting so few shots and scoring so few goals last year, that if we can score somewhere over two goals a game, that would be really good. I'd love to be selfish and get to three goals a game, because I think you can win a lot of games then. I'd love to see a huge increase in shutouts as well. We'll see where that lands us. But our number one focus to start the season is ourselves. We're getting better day to day. It's a little bit cliché, but I want to be competitive in every match. I want us to be a tough out, and that if we catch it on the right day, we can pick off a result somewhere that everyone else wasn't able to."