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A LOOK BACK: Women's Soccer Wraps Up Successful 2021 Season

Georgia Southern University
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Eagles made memorable run to the Sun Belt final, make incredible strides in Head Coach Chris Adams' first full season
STATESBORO - After its run to a first appearance in the Sun Belt Conference tournament championship match, the Georgia Southern women's soccer team has a lot to look back on in its successful 2021 campaign.

The Eagles finished with an 11-7-4 overall record, and a 4-3-3 mark in the Sun Belt. With 15 points, Georgia Southern tied for third in the league standings at the end of the regular season, the best finish since joining the league in 2014.

Statistically, Georgia Southern averaged 1.55 goals per match, which was fourth-best in the Sun Belt, while also allowing just a 1.04 GAA, third-best in the league. The 1.04 GAA also was the third-lowest in a single season in Georgia Southern history, eclipsed only by the 2000 and 2012 teams that each tallied an 0.95 GAA. The Eagles did so while facing 334 shots by their opposition, the second-most faced in a single season.

Other numbers show the season as not only one of the best in recent history for Georgia Southern women's soccer, but one of the best ever.

The 11 wins are tied for the seventh-most in a single season, while the seven losses are tied for the fifth-fewest. The .590 winning percentage is the eighth best and the 270 shots taken are the ninth-most in a single season. The Eagles’ 34 goals are tied for the 10th most. Finally, Michaela English and Sallie Newton combined for 106 goalie saves, 10th-most in a single season, and the seven shutouts recorded by Georgia Southern are tied for the fifth-most.

We caught up with Coach Adams this week to get his thoughts on how his first full season at the helm of Georgia Southern women's soccer shook out.

With all the successes the Eagles had this season, this was still the first step forward in your work at building this program. What do you think worked for you this season and what do you think the Eagles still need to accomplish to take that next step forward?

In season one, we accomplished a few important goals. The TEAM defending with a 1.04 GAA was probably one of the areas that we improved in the most. Communication was much better than it was in the spring season, and our discipline at keeping our shape was also much improved. I also thought our execution on set pieces was incredible. Typically, you can surprise some teams with a set piece and then it gets scouted, becoming more difficult to pull off. However, we executed so well that we were able to continue to create goals off set pieces, even though teams knew what was coming. That's a really good sign when your execution is so good that people can't stop you when they know what is coming! As far as taking the next step forward, we have to become more accurate with our shooting and more dangerous when crossing and finishing. Our statistics for our wide players have to be better and our shooting percentage of shots on goal must increase dramatically. We will look to focus on shooting technique and making better decisions in the final third this spring!

The Sun Belt was perhaps the tightest it's been in a while in standings and results at the end of the year, and each match in the tournament was a one-goal affair. Were you satisfied with how the Eagles competed in the Sun Belt matches week in and week out?

Conference play was extremely tight throughout the season. While we accomplished our goal of being one of the teams that got a bye in the first round of the conference tournament, we still think we can fly higher! We lost 2-1 in double overtime to the #1 seed, and 3-2 in double overtime to the #2 seed, while we tied the #3 seed 2-2. We are not far off from putting together a run at being the regular season #1 seed, but it takes a little more consistency to accomplish that goal. We were competitive in every conference match and now we just have to develop a killer instinct to put good teams away when the opportunity presents itself!

The defensive numbers were outstanding for the Eagles in 2021 - a 1.04 GAA, the third-best single-season GAA in school history, and seven shutouts. Talk about the strides that Georgia Southern made defensively this season.

I highlighted the TEAM defending in the first question, but it will continue to be a focal point for this program. Stingy defense needs to be a trademark for our program and I think with the added athleticism of our new players arriving, we will become even better at pressing to win the ball higher up the field. Shutouts are amazing because it means you cannot lose and we have plenty of weapons to find a goal, whether in the run of play or on a set piece, to make sure the shutout means a win! I think we can top that school-record GAA mark and that should be a goal!

Any final thoughts on the season as a whole, and what are you looking for the team to accomplish during the upcoming Spring season?

This spring will be about becoming a more efficient attacking team with a killer instinct to put teams away! We also will have to replace our starting outside backs, so we will look to develop some continuity with our new outside backs. The midfield will get a nice addition with Ellie McIntyre arriving this spring from Ole Miss, which will increase our mobility and provide another attacking option coming out of the midfield. I am excited to get this group going and think they are poised to pay it forward, improving on what was already a really positive season!