

Women's soccer shifts attention

Prepare for JMU and Meikle Koch dedication

by [Zack.Ssebatindira](#) on October 14, 2011 in [Sports](#), [Women's Soccer](#)



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Drexel freshman midfielder Alyssa Findlay dribbles the ball toward the opponent's goal during a Oct. 2 home game against Colonial Athletic Association rival Northeastern. The Dragons played stiff defense all game and forced the Huskies into a scoreless tie.

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In Chicago, 23 will always be Michael Jordan. In Sao Paulo, Brazil, 10 will always be Pele. In the Bronx, seven will always be Mickey Mantle. For those who follow sports, these numbers take on a life of their own, representing the athletes who stood out as exceptional members of the home team. For Drexel women's soccer, the number 9 will always hold special meaning.

With 16 goals and seven assists in during her four-year career with the Dragons, Laura Meikle Koch's place in Drexel soccer folklore was assured. On and off the field, it was her passion, courage, selflessness and determination that endeared her to all who were fortunate to meet her. These character traits being no more evident than throughout her battle with cancer which Koch eventually lost in 2008 at the age of 28.

Before their Oct. 14 conference game against James Madison University, the Drexel community will gather at the Kopp Lounge at 5:30 p.m. to honor Koch with the opening of the Laura Meikle Koch Locker Room. The opening of the locker room marks the culmination of a three-year fundraising effort, which has been made possible through the contributions of Drexel alumni, well-wishers and current students.

It is but one of many ways in which Koch's memory continues to be honored within the program. Another is through the awarding of Koch's No. 9 to a player via a sewn on patch on their jersey who demonstrates the same four qualities — courage, determination, passion and selflessness — that defined Koch's approach to life.

The current wearer of this patch is junior midfielder/forward Biz Matta, who managed to notch nine shots in 12 games played this season for Drexel.

Her aggressive style in the midfield will be one of the weapons that head coach Ray Goon and his assistant, Don Overmier, will be looking to draw on when Drexel takes on JMU Oct. 14.

Drexel goes into the game having failed to score in their last three games. The first game in that run was a 0-0 double-overtime draw at home against Northeastern followed by a two-game series on the road that saw them shut out in succession by William & Mary and Old Dominion.

Goon spoke about his side's performances so far this season.

“While each game will have its own ebb and flow, it would be accurate if our overall performance thus far were described as inconsistent,” he said. “There are definitely times when we are really clicking, everyone is on the same page and working well as a unit. By the same token, there are phases when we are not performing as well as we are capable, whether because of frustration, distractions, whatever the case may be.”

“In order to be more consistent, we will need to continue to work on staying mentally focused and physically active to minimize the frequency and duration of these lapses.”

Drexel faced off against the CAA-leading Tribe Oct. 7 and was undone by an early strike by junior forward Erin Liberatore. The Dragons' woes on the road, compounded by a second-half goal by sophomore Dani Rutter, all but ended Drexel's hopes of coming back into the game. The final score on the day: 2-0 in favor of William & Mary.

Drexel went into their second game of the weekend against Old Dominion with a 2-2-1 conference record looking to pick up their first road win of the season. They nearly had the early lead when a corner was headed onto the crossbar by sophomore forward Andi Stampone with the rebound finding its way to freshman Alyssa Findlay, who squeezed the rebound just wide.

The Dragons' luck took a turn for the worst when, a few minutes later, a cross from Lisa Bernadini found its way to the feet of Ashley Coutu, who jinked her way around freshman goalkeeper Eve Badana and tucked her effort in the far corner. Coutu's goal ended up being the decisive strike of the afternoon, as it was enough to see off the Dragons. Drexel dropped to 2-3-1 in the conference and 4-7-3 overall as they lost their seventh road game of the season.

Leading up to his team's upcoming crunch games, Goon commented on what his team needs to focus on.

“Any team will always feel more comfortable playing at home, but at this point of the season, you just need to gain points,” he said. “You can’t get caught up in whether you’re playing at home or on the road, playing a team ahead or behind you in the standings, playing the first leg or second of a conference weekend. Every game is equally important, no matter what circumstances surround it. “

Thus, the Dragons’ Oct. 14 game against JMU takes on added importance as all of Drexel’s wins this season have come at home.

Led by sophomore forward Lauren Wilson — five goals and five assists in 14 starts — the Dukes sit in the second spot in the conference standings with a 4-2 CAA record (7-5-2 overall) and come into the game on the back of a two-game winning streak that includes wins against Georgia State and UNC Wilmington. Fortunately for the Dragons, the silver lining for the home side is that in five attempts, the Dukes have only managed to win one game on the road so far this season.

Drexel’s two-game weekend then sees them take on Virginia Commonwealth University at 3 p.m. Oct. 16. Led by the tandem duo of Cristin Granados and Conrad Courtney — four goals apiece in 14 games — VCU comes into the weekend looking to add to their three-game winning streak that has seen them beat Towson, UNC Wilmington and Georgia State. Drexel is again banking on the fact that VCU is 1-4-1 away from home for the confidence that they can get the result that they need.

With Drexel closing out its regular season home schedule in that game against VCU, and wins being vital to keep their playoff hopes alive, the spirit and memory of Laura Meikle Koch will be a welcome boost for the travel-weary Dragons.