

Talented Irish not afraid of NU

BY DARREN IVY
Staff Reporter

Notre Dame athletic programs have a rich tradition.

Even though its football team may be having a down year, the No. 2 women's soccer team is still one of the most dominating programs in the country.

The Irish (21-0-1) have played in the last three NCAA finals, and the 1997 team's only blemish is a 2-2 tie with No. 1 North Carolina.

"We have talented players at every position," said Coach Chris Petrucelli, who has a 131-18-8 in seven years at Notre Dame.

Nebraska, 18-3, will try to match up with the Irish's talent level when the teams meet on Sunday at noon in South Bend, Ind.

Because of its tradition, Notre Dame is able to attract top players from around the world each year.

This allows them to have many quality players at every position, Petrucelli said. Strikers are one area where the Irish are deep.

The Irish have three players - sophomore Jenny Streiffer, who was an alternate for the 1996 Olympic team; freshman Meotis Erikson, who was the U.S. high school female soccer player of the year in 1997; and freshman Anne Makinen, a former Finnish player of the year - who have scored 19 or more goals. They also have several other players who have scored more than 10 goals.

"There is not one player you can mark (on offense) to stop us," Petrucelli said.

The defense also has been

impressive. Since the tie with North Carolina on Sept. 19, the Irish have won 15 straight games. In those games, Notre Dame has outscored its opponents 93-4.

One of those four goals allowed came in the opening-round 7-1 win against Cincinnati. Streiffer said the team came out a little flat, but doesn't expect it to come out flat against NU.

Streiffer, who is the Irish's leading point scorer, said she remembered Notre Dame's 1-0 loss to NU last spring.

"They are a really physical and strong team," Streiffer said. "They have super good athletes."

Petrucelli didn't put much weight on that game. Games in the spring are like scrimmages, and it doesn't matter if a team wins or loses, Petrucelli said.

From that game, Petrucelli remembered the physical toughness of NU and has warned his team.

"We need to make sure we wear our shinguards and pass the ball quickly or we will get knocked around," Petrucelli said.

Other than the spring game, the Huskers and Irish have never met, but Petrucelli knows the Huskers, in their fourth year of soccer, are an upcoming team.

"It is obvious from their record that they are getting better and better," Petrucelli said.

Even though NU has improved, Petrucelli is not convinced the Huskers will be able to duplicate their victory when the game counts for something.

"We'll find out if they can match up (Sunday)," Petrucelli said.

Aggies bounce back after dismal 1996

BY SAM MCKEWON
Staff Reporter

Big 12 **XII**

The bonfires didn't burn as brightly, the 12th man at Kyle Field didn't roar, and The Texas game wasn't even a contest.

This was last season for the Texas A&M Aggies.

A&M limped through 1996, going 6-6 and failing to have a winning season for the first time since 1983. The Aggies were upset by Southwestern Louisiana and then lost 51-15 to rival Texas.

But the 1997 campaign bears no resemblance to last year's debacle.

Texas A&M stands at 8-2 this season and has already earned a berth in the Big 12 Conference Championship as the Southern Division representative.

Texas A&M Coach R.C. Slocum said he has seen improvement in every area.

"We're working together much better than we did last year," Slocum said.

Some of the 16th-ranked Aggies' success can be credited to an offense that has not had a problem with

turnovers. A&M is tied for third in the nation in turnover margin with 28 takeaways and 13 giveaways.

The major contributor to that statistic is senior quarterback Brannon Stewart. This season, Stewart and freshman Randy McCown have only thrown two interceptions.

Not to be forgotten is the traditional A&M rushing offense. The Aggies rank 14th nationally in rushing offense, averaging 217.4 yards per game. Baylor Coach Dave Roberts, whose team lost to A&M 38-10, said the Aggies still know how to play smash-mouth football.

"We have had problems with physical teams, and they were very physical," Roberts said.

But Texas Coach John Mackovic said the Aggies' success leads back to their coach.

"R.C. Slocum has done a great job of rebounding his team this year," Mackovic said. "You have to give him a lot of credit."

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