SOCCER

Bison booters place second in NCAA nationals

Howard University showed that they are indeed alive and kicking when it comes to playing soccer.

During the first weekend in December, they challenged the nation's best, reaching the Final Four of the NCAA nationals before dropping a 1-0 verdict to Indiana in the championship match. The Bison ended their season at 19-1-1 and the Hoosiers completed their '88 schedule at 19-3-3.

Forward Peter Isaacs whisked past two Hoosiers and took an 11-yard shot from the left wing. The shot overwhelmed the Indiana goalie, but missed its mark, sailing wide of the net.

Howard became one of college soccer's most dangerous teams this season, primarily because of their speed and the ability to outmaneuver the opposition on offense and defense. Prior to the NCAA finals, the Bison had won 24 straight matches. Incidentally, Howard won the NCAA soccer title in 1974.

In the finals, Indiana coach Jerry Yeagley didn't want his team to get into a running match. Instead, the Hoosiers opted to employ a more controlled type of approach and dictate the pace of the contest to their liking.

Sean Shapert's penalty kick in the first half was the only score and proved sufficient to give Indiana their third national championship.

That penalty was set up when IU midfielder Han Roest worked himself into the open on the right side of the penalty area and was pulled down by HU's Michael Williams.

Bison goalie Shaka Hislop wasn't convinced that the Hoosiers should have been awarded a penalty on that play. Roest, he explained, wasn't actually fouled.

He just put on enough of an act to convince the officials, Hislop insisted. The decision didn't sit very well with the HU goalkeeper.

Nevertheless, Howard had their chances to stage a comeback. Their offense contained enough firepower for them to score two, maybe even three goals. But the guys out of D.C were never able to get totally untracked and use their team speed to their advantage.

Their best opportunity to tie the match came a little past the midway-point of the first half. It proved to be the only time when the Bison demonstrated their superior foot speed.

Forward Peter Isaacs whisked past two Hoosiers and took an 11-yard shot from the left wing. The shot overwhelmed the Indiana goalie, but missed its mark, sailing wide of the net.

The Bison enjoyed a thoroughly productive season. Before reaching the championship round, Howard was ranked No. 7 among Division I soccer programs.

Coach Keith Tucker's team advanced to the final round by surprising a highly touted South Carolina team with a 2-0 upset.

The Gamecocks were felt by many to have the best shot at the title this year. They had been ranked No. 5 in the nation.

The seeds for the Bison's victory over South Carolina were sewn in the second half when Waidi Akanni converted a penalty shot (his 16th goal of the season) early in the second half. The penalty was set up when Isaacs was pulled down from behind by the Gamecocks' Mike Gosselin.

Sheldon Jones put the match away at the 15 minute mark, scoring on a breakaway goal. It was Isaacs who assumed the posture of a playmaking point guard in basketball by sliding an accurate pass to the swift moving Jones. In so many ways, that play was reminiscent of a properly executed fast break on the hardwood.

The Gamecocks had three opportunities to get on the board during the early part of the match. Midfielder Jeff Love found an opening in the Bison defense, but couldn't convert a short, six-yard kick.

Howard goalie Hislop foiled that attempt with a diving save that kept South Carolina at bay. That particular sequence appeared to have taken some of the zestiness out of the Gamecocks' offensive attack.

-Cyrus Monroe

SLOWLY BUT SURELY

Catchings has PVU Panthers on right track

In a lot of places, a 5-5 record would get the football coach fired.

Prairie View is not like a lot of other places.

The Panthers 5-5 finish is their first non-losing mark since they went 6-5 in 1976. That's modest success by most standards.

But the .500 season has coach Haney Catchings looking optimistically to the future and his SWAC opponents feeling a bit uneasy.

"The thought has already crossed my mind that we have to play at Prairie View next year," said Jackson State coach W.C. Gorden, whose team has won four straight SWAC titles and hasn't lost to Prairie View since 1971.

"They're not to be taken lightly as in past years when we had a soft week of practice prior to playing them."

The credit for PVU's resurgence must go to Catchings, who just completed his first full year as head coach. He took over the program on an interim basis two games into the '87 season when Conway Hayman was fired. He didn't get the job full-time until the middle of February.

The result was that Prairie View lost several potential recruits. "They didn't want to be in a situation where they didn't know who the coach was," said Catchings. "

Catching's first move in starting to reverse the Panthers grid fortunes was to change players' attitudes. "I wanted to instill discipline and self-belief that they are just as good as any other school," the coach said. "We weren't going to be the walking mat in the conference. It was hard, and still is hard. We're at least a year away from having that total discipline that's needed to be a championship team."

The turning point came when the Panthers defeated Southern 20-14 in Baton Rouge, La.

"People look at Southern as one of the big four in the conference every year," said Catchings. "That victory changed the way people looked at us. From then on, things changed. Practice got a lot better. The players could see what we had been telling them."

The Panthers season is even more impressive when you consider that tailback Victor Pegram and fullback Len Bradford, both two-year starters and the team's top two rushers, were declared academically ineligible after three games.

"That could have been devastating," said Catchings. "We had talked about overcoming adversity and being prepared when the chance came."

Apparently Greg Cofer listened to those talks. He stepped in for Pegram and rushed for 373 yards, averaging more than four yards a carry.

"There's an attitude of finding a way to win," added coach Southern coach Marino Casem. "It's not a laid back program. The kids are trying to find a way to win rather than trying to find a way not to look bad. In my opinion, that makes all the difference.

"You'll find those kinds of programs and you can't beat them. They don't expect to lose. They say: 'The only way we'll lose is if we beat ourselves.'"

The future looks bright for Prairie View. The school recently completed the finishing touches on a practice field. Their home field, Blackshear Stadium, has a new playing surface, track, and bleachers.

"When people see the campus and the additions, they'll be less hesitant about coming here," said Catchings. "We can become consistent winners, and we will become consistent winners. We just need to get a few more top quality athletes.

"In the past, a lot of guys were hesitant to come here because Prairie View had lost for 10 or 15 years and things hadn't changed. Making .500, we got some support that hasn't been around for the last 10 or 15 years. That helps."

It also helps having a solid nucleus returning on offense, including quarterback Kevin Phillips and wide receivers Thomas Monroe, George Glaze, and Sam Widemon.

-Roscoe Nance

Photo courtesy North Carolina A&T

Ruth Morris, a senior track standout at North Carolina A&T, shows her participation keepsakes from the '88 Summer Olympics in Seoul. Morris represented her country, the Virgin Islands, in the Games.

NOTES ... QUOTES ... AND TALES OF WOE

By ROSCOE NANCE

The **UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA's** football program is arguably the worst in the nation.

The Firebirds finished the season at 0-11 after forfeiting their final game because they only had 21 players available. They have a 20-game losing streak.

But athletic director Lee McElroy says there are no plans to drop football.

"We intend to bring it back," said McElroy. "Even though we were short on numbers, the Board of Trustees and the president are very supportive."

The program was doomed from the start of the season. There was some question as to whether the Firebirds would field a team for '88 because several players were academically ineligible and several others' status was uncertain.

Still, McElroy thinks the program can be salvaged.

"We're going to have to have a major committment from the administration," he said. "If you're going to run an adequate football program there needs to be housing (on or near campus), and there needs to be intensity associated with recruiting."

McElroy said that the Board of Trustees is in the process of reviewing the housing situation. He also said that coach Bobby Frazier's performance would be reviewed soon -- as part of the school's policy to review each athletic program at the conclusion of its season. .....

Jackson State running back **LEWIS TILLMAN** and Florida A & M wide receiver/kick returner **HOWARD HUCKABY,** are among the nominees for the Payton Award, given to the top player in Division I-AA. Tillman holds the Jackson State career and single season rushing records and was No. 2 in I-AA this season (138.8 yards a game). Huckaby was No. 2 (19.2 yards a return) in punt returns and has returned four kicks for touchdowns. .....

VIRGINIA UNION'S 7-2 record gave the Panthers their 18th consecutive winning season. That streak is second only to Minnesota-Duluth (19) in Division II. The Panthers will start the '89 season two victories shy of 400 in 88 years of competition. .....

So much for the notion that the **CENTRAL INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION** is nothing but a basketball conference. The CIAA placed three teams in the 16-team Division II playoff field, and all but four of its member schools played .500 ball or better. .....

JACKSON STATE is 0-7 in the 1-AA playoffs after losing to Stephen F. Austin 24-0 in this year's first round game. But coach W.C. Gorden isn't letting the Tigers' failures get him down.

"I wouldn't trade any of our successes for one playoff victory," said Gorden, whose team has won 25 consecutive conference games and went unbeaten (8-0-2) in the regular season for the first time in school history. "Our goal is to win that first playoff game and get that monkey off our backs. A lot of schools haven't been in the playoffs. Apparently, they have gorillas on their backs." .....

Calvin Lange, who played baseball and football at **NORTH CAROLINA A & T** from 1958-1961, has been named as the Aggies baseball coach. .....