

## **MEN'S SOCCER MAKES HISTORY WITH A 16-WIN CAMPAIGN**

As the 2008 men's soccer season began, second-year Head Coach Peter Mendel's primary goal was to improve upon the 7-9-3 record overall and 5-4-3 record in The Commonwealth Coast Conference (TCCC) his team had posted a year earlier. He also had hopes of not only qualifying for the TCCC Tournament, but also advancing deep into post-season play. Ultimately, his expectations were dramatically surpassed with the success his team enjoyed.

When he began his tenure in 2007, Mendel knew that it would take some time to re-build a program that had not posted a winning record since 1995, and had struggled to a combined mark of 50-152-15 over the previous 12 years. But no one foresaw the string of remarkable milestones that his Colonels would achieve over the course of 11 weeks.

Curry started the season 2-1 before tying its next two games. One of the ties came against Western New England College. Battling the defending conference champions (and eventual 2008 title winners) to a 2-2 deadlock in Springfield provided a huge boost of confidence to Mendel's young squad, and gave an early indication that the Colonels would be a force to be reckoned with in the TCCC. A 4-2 loss at New England College on September 27 dropped the team's overall record to 5-2-2, but then Curry strung together eight wins in a row between September 29 and October 18. Five of the eight wins were shutouts and six were against league foes. The historic streak was snapped on October 22 after a nail-biting 1-0 overtime loss at Colby-Sawyer. Three days later, the Colonels picked up their 14<sup>th</sup> victory (2-1 over Wentworth) to become the winningest men's soccer team in school history.

With a conference record of 9-2-2, the Colonels began their post-season run as the #3 seed in the TCCC Tournament. Hosting its first playoff game in 13 years, Curry entertained #6 seed Gordon College in the quarterfinal round. Mendel's squad broke out to a 3-0 lead then held on for a 3-2 victory. This marked another milestone as Curry advanced to the conference semi-finals for only the second time in school history.

An upset by #7 Nichols over #2 Roger Williams gave Curry another home contest in the conference semi-finals. On November 5, as a cold rain fell, the Bison scored the game's first goal mid-way through the opening half. Just over a minute later, the Colonels pulled even on a goal by senior forward Jeff Shea. The 1-1 tie stood until the 19:18 mark of the second frame when the visitors scored what proved to be the decisive goal, leaving Curry one win shy of a berth in the tournament finals.

Despite the obvious disappointment, the Colonels' magical season went on. For the first time in school history, the team was chosen to play in the ECAC Division III New England Tournament. Curry was the #2 seed and would once again host a playoff game. The Colonels played the #7 seed Lasell College in a quarterfinal match-up and captured a tense 1-0 victory. Curry went on to host #3 Coast Guard in the semi-finals, but the 2008 campaign came to an official close after a 2-0 Bears' win.

The 2008 Colonels wound up establishing or tying a number of team and individual records, including wins in a season (16), easily surpassing the old mark of 13 victories by the 1985 Colonels. Mendel's 2008 squad reeled off a school-record eight victories in a row, besting the 1995 team's seven-game winning

streak. His team tied the school mark with 11 shutouts, a feat first accomplished in 1985. Individually, freshman goaltender Brian Newsome set a school mark with a 0.85 goals against average, and tied a record by notching seven shutouts. Although not records, junior forward Ben Radzicki did achieve the second-best totals all-time for both goals (16) and points (35) in a season.

Accolades began pouring in at the close of the regular season. Mendel was deservedly named as TCCC Coach of the Year, and three of his players earned First Team All-Conference honors: Newsome, Radzicki and senior back JJ Hallisey. Shea was a Second Team All-TCCC selection, while senior midfielder Clayton Corto and junior back Matt Boyle garnered Honorable Mention All-Conference honors. The trio of Hallisey (First Team), Radzicki (Third Team) and Newsome (Third Team) were further recognized by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) on its All-New England squads. Newsome was the only freshman in New England to be so honored.

When all was said and done, Mendel reflected on the significance of the 2008 campaign. "Our success this year was truly a matter of the guys simply believing in themselves and their abilities. They worked extremely hard during pre-season to become a better and more cohesive team. They constantly pushed each other in practice to ensure that when they were called upon they could contribute in a positive way."

Mendel added: "The season was certainly something I will never forget. I had a great bunch of guys who achieved a record that no other Curry team has been able to accomplish. I think we set the bar for future teams and have made a positive move toward becoming a premier program in the Northeast. It was just great to be part of something new and exciting. When I took over two years ago, I knew this institution and program were capable of making a run at a conference title. This year proved we are on the right path and we will continue to build with student-athletes who are successful both on and off the field."