

The University of Delaware men's soccer enters the 2003 season with more than a few new faces.

With a year of Colonial Athletic Association play under their belts, the Blue Hens hope to improve from last year's mark of 2-12-4 (0-7-2, 10th CAA) with the help of 17 new faces.

In addition, five of the losses in 2002 came by one goal, including two of them in overtime, making that record not as indicative as the team's ability.

However, after a decade of coaching men's soccer at Delaware, head coach Marc Samonisky knows not to place too much pressure on the incoming freshmen. In fact, Delaware may be the youngest team in Division I this season. The Blue Hen roster has 16 true freshmen and three redshirt freshmen on it this season.

"We're going to have a lot newness," said Samonisky. "It's going to be how quick they adjust to college life and college-level play, and I think both of those factors need to be considered. It's a completely new environment for them, both academically and athletically."

"I think what's going to happen is that we're going to have some good games and some not so good games and it's going to be because of so much newness," he added.

Samonisky hopes that the team's adjustment period will not take too long.

"For our program it's very important for us to win during the first part of the year," he said. "If we can win some of the first half of the season, I think we have a much better chance coming into the league to win some during the second part."

With the help of six returning starters, Samonisky hopes that the rookies and returnees can work together to improve on last season.

"If the returning players can make a positive contribution and help with the little bit of experience that the freshman are lacking, that will help us," Samonisky noted. "I think our team is made up of so much new and so little old that we can't only rely on the new or only rely on the old. It's got to be a mix of both."

Leading the way for the freshmen – and the rest of team, Samonisky will rely on the dependable defensive play of junior goalkeeper and co-captain Kyle Haynes to keep the team in some games.



Stephen Mangat

Haynes started all 18 games for the Blue Hens in 2002 and posted 87 saves along with four shutouts. He matched a season-high nine saves on three occasions (Hofstra, Old Dominion, James Madison).

"Kyle gives us a little bit of stability in the goal and can keep us in games," said Samonisky. "He got better from his first year to his second and we need him to continue the progression – to get better from his second year to his third."

With Haynes, fellow co-captain senior Stephen Mangat will also provide the valuable leadership this youthful team needs.

Over the course of three years, Mangat has played three different positions and Samonisky hopes that this year they will be able to give him optimum opportunities to lead the Hens.

"He's played on a regular basis and hopefully we can find out what position he should be in," said Samonisky. "He can play almost anywhere in the midfield and the defense. Regardless, he'll likely play a central position and, hopefully, be the force to keep everything together."

While Samonisky must find a place for his veteran players, he also is faced with the task of determining the best places for the 17 newcomers – 16 true freshmen and one transfer.

Offensively, Samonisky is looking to two freshmen, George Severini (Havertown, PA) and Kyle Peters (Mt. Laurel, NJ), to adjust quickly to the college level of play. Both Severini and Peters were four-year letterwinners at their respective high schools. Peters was named Burlington County Player of the Year in 2002, while Severini boasts all-state, all-region and All-Southeastern Pennsylvania honors.

With Severini and Peters, Samonisky hopes that sophomore David Egozi is also ready for plenty of minutes at the forward position.

"David just has to demonstrate that he can get it done at this level," said Samonisky.

In terms of depth, Samonisky knows the forward position is the thinnest. However, UD's veteran coach hopes to find the winning combination with good play from a large group of athletic backs and midfielders.

Defensively, Samonisky is looking towards any one of the freshmen to step up. Freshmen Anthony Pezza (Jackson, NJ) and Ian Sylvester (Dover, DE) bring well-rounded high-school careers to the University of Delaware.

The depth of the midfield is where Samonisky is going to place a lot of burden of the team.

"We have a lot of people to play in the midfield positions," said Samonisky. "We have a lot of guys who can bring in other parts of the game to the midfield."

Mangat, along with senior Nathan Danforth (McLean, VA), junior Adam Flanigan, sophomores Ed Cweik (Old Bridge, NJ), and freshmen Matt Haney (Newark, DE) and Zac Naylon (Shillington, PA), are expected to battle for the chance to play in the midfield.

Flanigan battled a variety of nagging pre-season injuries entering the season while also competing for a starting job. He started 15 games as a sophomore.

"If Adam's healthy, he is going to see a fair share of playing time," said Samonisky.

Cweik returns to the Hens after a solid rookie campaign. Last year, he action in 16 games, starting 15. He also tallied one goal and one assist on the season.

His freshmen position-mates bring with them stellar high school careers. Samonisky hopes the rookies will flourish "under the gun."

Haney, a Delaware native, brings three letters and three years of all-state honors to the Blue Hens. Naylon also earned all-county and all-division honors during high school.

Samonisky wants to depend on his midfield to keep control of the ball.

"We need to keep possession of the ball," said Samonisky. "I think you get more tired when you are defense. We want to control the game – keep the ball and not get as tired."

Samonisky hopes all his players, from freshmen to seniors, are ready to accept the challenge of collegiate soccer and take risks.

"I think we can put some pretty good midfielders and defenders on the field," said Samonisky. "If they accept the fact that if you defend well, take advantage of the one chance you get and score a goal off of it, you can win the game, then I think we can be successful."

While Samonisky knows that it may some time to work out all of the "newness", he thinks this team can do some good things.

"I hope they are ready for a challenge," said Samonisky. "I think they are all ready to play."



Nathan Danforth



Kyle Haynes