Fillies Soccer Season Kicks off Friday at Toccoa Falls

In six years as the only women’s soccer coach in the history of ABAC, Jimmy Ballenger has never had a losing season. Now he’d like a deep run into the playoffs.

“We’ve had successful seasons,” Ballenger said. “In fact, we have made the state playoffs five of the past six years. But just like any team, we’d like to do more.”

The Fillies return six players from last year’s team which finished 9-8 overall and lost in the first round of the state playoffs to a Middle Georgia squad that ABAC had defeated twice in the regular season. Ballenger’s team hosted the first round of the playoffs for the second year in a row but fell short by a 2-1 margin.

“The dynamics of the game have changed a lot in the last six years,” Ballenger said. “Recruiting has become much more competitive.

“Even getting into college has become more difficult. When an athlete plays for ABAC, they have to have academic ability as well as athletic ability.”

Returning players getting ready for season opener Friday on the road at Toccoa Falls include Krista Whitley, a midfielder who played at Houston County High School.

“I expect a lot of great things out of Krista,” Ballenger said. “I look for her to score some, give some assists and play great defense.”

Ballenger said the team will also depend on Lindsey Causey from Moultrie, Kaitlyn Grahame from Prescott (Ariz.) High School, and goal keeper Kaylee Wynn from Ocilla to be key personnel for the Fillies.

“I have also been very impressed with one of our freshmen, Kellie Starvetsky from Warner Robins,” Ballenger said. “She was recruited by a lot of schools, and I’m glad to have her at ABAC.”

Three freshmen from England, Nikita Morris, Rebecca Russell, and Charlotte Eastwood, should see some playing time as well, Ballenger said.

Ballenger has a contact in England who is always looking for soccer players who want to further their careers in America.

“All three of these young ladies are supposed to be excellent players,” Ballenger said. “America and Japan are the top two countries for women’s soccer right now, and many players want to play in college in those two countries.”

As far as goal scoring, Ballenger expects Kimberly Rivers from the Cayman Islands to find the back of the net on many occasions this season. She will try to shoulder some of the burden left by the departure of Melissa Johnson, who set the ABAC single season record with 32 goals last year.

The Fillies will compete against eight other teams in the Georgia Collegiate Athletic Association. Like most everyone else, Ballenger is picking Darton as the team to beat.

“Darton lost to Tyler 1-0 in the national title game last year,” Ballenger said. “They will be very good again. I think Georgia Perimeter will also be strong.”

With seven home matches beginning with a 5 p.m. encounter with Gordon on Aug. 28, Ballenger hopes fans of the Fillies turn out in record numbers this year.

“Our fans have really made a difference,” Ballenger said. “We’ll also have a new scoreboard this year. That couldn’t have been accomplished without Coach (Alan) Kramer (athletics director), Dr. (Niles) Reddick (vice-president for academic affairs), and John Clemens (vice-president for planning and operations).”

Ballenger said it’s a real team effort to produce ABAC victories on the soccer field. He gave much credit to his assistant coaches over the last six years who have included Chad Howell, Doug Head, and Dusty Clark.

“It takes everybody to get the job done,” Ballenger said. “It’s not just one person. It’s everybody working together.”
Nursing Program Information Session Tonight

A nursing program information session will be held in the ABAC Health Sciences building tonight from 4-5 p.m. This session is for prospective students interested in the associate degree nursing program.

Associate Professor of Nursing Becky Arnold said the nursing faculty will be available at the information session to discuss the program. The session will include group discussion and one-on-one attention with faculty in the field.

The nursing program at ABAC is an associate degree program that prepares students to take the Registered Nurse (R.N.) licensure examination. Nursing graduates at ABAC have a 98 per cent pass rate on the exam.

For more information on the session, interested persons can contact the ABAC School of Nursing at (229) 391-5020.

Other nursing information sessions will be held on Sept. 11, Oct. 8, and Nov. 13.

Brian Ray Named ABAC’s New Theater Director

Dr. Brian Ray, Associate Professor of English in the School of Liberal Arts, takes on a new role this semester as Theatre Director in the Fine Arts program at ABAC. Ray will oversee all theatre productions and theatre classes.

Ray brings a lengthy background of live theatre to his new position. He has a degree in theatre arts and has performed in over 50 productions as an actor. In January, he directed Tiftarea Academy’s production of “Enchanted April”. He is an active performer at the Tift Theatre and chairman of the Tift Theatre Advisory Board.

Ray has also acted with the Baldwin Players several times, most recently in “No Exit” in fall 2010, and he wrote a play, “Never Runs Smooth: Shakespeare on ‘Love’” that was performed by the Baldwin Players in 2006.

“I hope to bring an energy and passion for theatre to ABAC that will be reflected in the plays,” Ray said.

Eventually, Ray would like to restore ABAC’s theatre transfer degree, but that will probably be a few years away. His first goal is to return the theatre productions at ABAC to Howard Auditorium, as well as explore other possible venues such as staging historical plays at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture, which is a part of the ABAC campus. He would like to provide fun shows as well as some more serious, thought-provoking plays. He even plans to work with ABAC’s music program to possibly bring an occasional musical to ABAC’s stage.

The first production he will direct this fall will be “The Hallelujah Girls”, a play by Jessie Jones, Nicholas Hope, and Jamie Wooten. It’s a comedy about five southern women who turn an old church into a day spa, and there are problems galore along the path to achieving their dream. The play has parts for six women and two men.

Auditions for “The Hallelujah Girls” will take place on Sept. 4-5 at 6:30 p.m. each night in Conger Hall, Room 319. No experience is necessary to audition, and all auditions are open to all ABAC students, faculty, staff, and the local community. Performances will be Oct. 25-27 at 7 p.m. each night in Howard Auditorium.

For more information on ABAC’s theatre program or on auditions for “The Hallelujah Girls” contact Ray at bray@abac.edu.
Hall Named Director of Honors Program

Dr. Cynthia Hall, Associate Professor of English in the School of Liberal Arts, takes the reins of the Honors Program this fall at ABAC.

She hopes to expand the already well-established Honors Program, making it the choice for prominent students from all over the state.

“ABAC has gathered top faculty members from major institutions around the country who work with the Honors program,” Hall said. “These professors have an extremely impressive amount of scholarly knowledge and professional experience to share with the students. ABAC has brought the contemporary academic world to Tifton so students do not have to leave the area to receive an exceptional educational experience.”

Hall received her B.A. in English from Mount St. Mary College; a M.Ed. in English Education from Emmanuel College; a M.A. in English from the University of West Georgia; and her Ph.D. in English from the University of California, Riverside.

Students in the Honors Program must make a score of 1100 or better on the SAT or a composite score of 24 or better on the ACT, complete 15 credit hours of designated Honors courses; maintain an overall 3.2 or higher grade point average for each academic year; meet the requirements of the college’s Student Code of Conduct; be an active member of the Honors Student Association; and participate in the association’s campus and community activities.

Starting this fall, the Honors Program will have an Honors Lounge where students can gather for movie nights, book clubs, meetings with professors, and socializing with their peers.

“The more interaction the students can have with professors and with other Honors students, the better and more well-rounded they become,” said Hall. “Being in the program allows for this added experience as Honors students are mentored into the scholarly and professional world of both academia and of their chosen careers.”

For more information on the Honors Program, interested students can contact Hall at (229) 391-4955 or via e-mail at chall@abac.edu.

Bryan Named Student Financial Services Director

Traci Bryan was named director of Student Financial Services (SFS) by John Clemens in a recent announcement. Bryan has worked at ABAC since 2000 in various positions in the areas of Financial aid and Enterprise Data Services. Don’t hesitate to contact Bryan or SFS for assistance at sfs@abac.edu or (229) 391-4910.

Stannard Moving to Atlanta as Regional Recruiter

Kaitlin Stannard moved to Atlanta last week to become a regional recruiter. Stannard will work full-time in the metro Atlanta area, allowing her to be more available to students and alumni, host events, and save money on travel. She will be back on campus for large events like Stallion Days and high-volume time for the admissions office. Stannard graduated from Michigan State University and began working at ABAC last July. Contact Stannard at kstannard@abac.edu.

Redneck Olympics

ABAC students enjoyed some old-fashioned redneck fun at the rodeo arena Thursday night during the second annual Redneck Olympics. Teams of two competed in events including bare foot mud run, tractor tire flipping, hay bale toss, car bash and seed spitting contests. Student like Paul Griffin and Jake Williams (above) even dressed the part for the games. The event was hosted by the School of Agriculture and Natural resources. Prizes up for grabs included gift cards and paid dues any Ag club of the winners choice.

The FOCUS is an electronic publication produced by the ABAC Public Relations Office. Please submit information by Wednesday at 2 p.m. to Ashley Mock at amock@abac.edu for inclusion in the next FOCUS.