For IMMEDIATE Release  

SOPHOMORE sensation Nikita Morris will lead the undefeated Fillies into action on the ABAC soccer field at 5 p.m. today when the Fillies take on Middle Georgia.

English Player at ABAC Adjusts to South Georgia Heat

TIFTON—Nikita Morris wiped the sweat from her forehead. Her practice jersey was already soaked from the 102-degree temperature on the soccer field at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. For just a moment, the sophomore physical education major caught a fleeting mental glimpse of a rainy, cold day in her hometown of Norfolk, England.
But then she swung her right leg and punched the ball into the net. And all was right again in her home away from home in Tifton, Ga.

Morris, the 2012 Georgia Collegiate Athletic Conference Player of the Year, will lead the Fillies on to the ABAC soccer field today at 5 p.m. against arch rival Middle Georgia State College.

“Adapting to the heat here was really hard last year,” Morris said. “It’s really tough when you’re on the field playing soccer. It’s a lot colder in England, and it rains a lot.”

The heat hasn’t dampened her enthusiasm for the year ahead.

“I am very excited about this season,” Morris said. “We have a great team and a good bunch of girls. We are trying to go all the way this year.”

To date, Coach Jimmy Ballenger’s team has compiled a 4-0 record. Morris missed the season opener because of an injury but has scored four goals in the other three games including a hat trick with three goals in a 9-0 win over Andrew on Tuesday.

With the 34 goals she scored last year, Morris is only 12 short of breaking the all-time ABAC career record of 49 set by Katrina Duncan-Marshalleck in 2008-09.

“Hopefully, I can break that record but mainly I want the team to score a lot of goals so we can win,” Morris said.

Jodie Corless, also from England, has led the team in scoring this year with nine goals.

When Ballenger recruited Morris, he really thought her forte was going to be as a key defender. After her freshman campaign where Morris set the ABAC single season goal scoring record and was named first team all-conference and a member of the National Junior College Athletic Association All-America squad, he realized what a diamond in the rough he had in the green-and-gold of ABAC.
“She’s great,” Ballenger said. “And she’ll be the first to tell you that soccer is a team sport, and she can’t do it alone.”

Morris embraced the change to the offensive mindset.

“It was a big change,” she said. “I adapted. It felt really good scoring goals. Now I just want to keep doing it.”

Morris said her hometown in England is a small farming community that is not nearly the size of Tifton. She went through an agency to find an opportunity to go to college and play soccer in the United States.

“Coach Ballenger was interested in me, so we got together and worked things out,” Morris said.

Obviously things are different in America.

“Everything’s a lot bigger here,” Morris said. “I was very surprised that football boots are called cleats, and football is called soccer.”

She does miss some English delicacies.

“I miss the typical English roast,” Morris said. “But I enjoy the food here. It’s nice.”

Having Morris return for her second year as a member of the Fillies has been very “nice” for the ABAC soccer team as well.

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