

Athletics: Men's Soccer

2010 Review

From the opening day of preseason drills the Muhlenberg men's soccer team broke every huddle the exact same way. Instead of saying "win" or "team," the Mules would yell "hard work."

Even in the midst of record-breaking streaks and major jumps in the national polls the Mules still remained focused on one goal: outworking the opposition.

So it's no surprise that the 2010 squad cemented its legacy as one of the most successful teams in school history after a 13-3-6 finish, the program's fourth run to the "Sweet 16" of the NCAA Tournament and a No. 12 ranking in the final national poll (the highest since 1995).

The Mules' season started in impressive fashion with back-to-back 5-0 wins over Marywood and Centenary, followed by a 4-0 blanking of Wilkes. Junior **Cody Antonini** showed his explosiveness as he became the first Mule in 43 years to begin the season with two consecutive multiple-goal games.



Daniels is the first goalie in Mule history to be named first-team all-region two years in a row.

After tying New York University 1-1, Muhlenberg regained its offensive prowess with a 5-2 win over Moravian before earning another 1-1 draw with Franklin & Marshall in its Centennial Conference opener.

Continuing with CC play, the Mules scored a 4-0 win over Gettysburg followed by back-to-back road ties, 1-1 at Dickinson and 0-0 at Johns Hopkins.

Muhlenberg continued to roll with a 2-0 win over regionally ranked DeSales and a 5-0 domination of Washington before playing to a 2-2 draw against another regionally ranked opponent, Drew.

After a 2-0 win at McDaniel, the Mules faced their only multiple-goal deficit of the season

when they fell behind 2-0 at halftime at New Jersey. But Antonini struck with a pair of second-half goals a little more than 11 minutes apart to force a tie and keep Muhlenberg unbeaten.

A 1-0 win against Haverford moved the Mules to 9-0-6 and into the national top 20, creating a new school mark for the longest unbeaten streak. It also set the stage for showdown for the CC regular-season title against fellow conference unbeaten and top-10 ranked Swarthmore.

Despite multiple scoring opportunities, the Mules could not find the back of the net against the Garnet and suffered their first loss of the season, 1-0. But Muhlenberg rebounded with a 3-0 win at Ursinus to earn the third seed in the CC tournament.

In their semifinal matchup, the Mules dominated Franklin & Marshall 4-0 in record-setting fashion to avenge their regular season tie. The four goals tied the mark for most goals in a conference tournament game, while sophomore **Danny Way** and senior **Mike Williams** tied CC tournament records with two goals and two assists, respectively.



Mike Williams scored more than half of his career points (17 of 28) during his senior season.

The win set up a championship game rematch with Swarthmore. Williams put the Mules ahead early with an unassisted goal in the 29th minute. But the Garnet used a penalty kick late in the second half to force overtime and then scored the game-winner in the second extra session.

But Muhlenberg's 11-2-6 record was more than good enough to earn the Mules an at-large bid to the NCAA Tournament.

In the opening round against Keene State, Way struck with a pair of second-half goals — making him the second player in school history to score multiple goals in an NCAA Tournament game — to move the Mules onto the second round against top-15 ranked Stevens.



Cecconi started all 56 games in which he played during the past three seasons.

Way continued his offensive outburst against the host Ducks, who had a 34-game home unbeaten streak and had not lost a game other than by shootout in the NCAAs since 2005. The sophomore scored on a leaping header in the 26th minute to put the Mules ahead, 1-0. But a Stevens goal with less than a minute left in the first half tied the game at the break. After a scoreless second half, the Mules took over in the extra sessions. Muhlenberg outshot the Ducks 6-1 in overtime and finally struck when junior **Josh Luginbuhl** buried a shot past the diving goalkeeper in the 107th minute, igniting a wild Mule celebration.

With an assist on Luginbuhl's goal, Way set a school mark for points in an NCAA Tournament (7). The win moved Muhlenberg to the "Sweet 16" for the first time since 1997.

For only the second time in school history the Mules played host to the sectional round of the national tournament. When Muhlenberg took the field against Merchant Marine, Varsity Field was washed in a sea of red.

After falling behind early, the Mules made a strong offensive push, including a rocket shot from Antonini that blasted off the crossbar and shook the entire goal late in the second half. Muhlenberg could not find the equalizer, however, and its season came to an end with a 1-0 loss.

But even with the tough, season-ending loss on its own home field, Muhlenberg still put together a very impressive run.

On top of the unbeaten streak and hosting a "Sweet 16" game, it was only the third time the Mules won a pair of NCAA Tournament games in a season. And after being a fixture in the top 25 most of the year and finishing among the nation's elite, Muhlenberg received a great deal of postseason recognition.

Antonini led the way, earning All-America honors for the second year in a row. He was named to the second team after his 16-goal, 39-point performance. The junior forward currently ranks in the top 10 on Muhlenberg's career lists with 33 goals (eighth) and 78 points (tied for ninth).

Antonini and senior goalkeeper **Jason Daniels** were also named to the All-Mid-Atlantic Region first team for the second consecutive season. Daniels ranked in the top 30 nationally in save percentage (.873) and goals against average (0.60) and was voted to the D3soccer.com All-America second team. He finished his career with 13 shutouts in two seasons and added a unique accomplishment for a goalie by recording two assists in one game (against Moravian).

Way (13 goals, 29 points) and senior backs **Eric Williams** and **Matt Cecconi** were named to the all-region third team, while Mike Williams (5 goals, 7 assists) was named honorable mention All-CC.

Senior **Tom Reilly** (2 goals, 2 assists), juniors Luginbuhl (7 goals, 1 assist), **Tim Leischner** (5 assists) and **Steve Giannacio** (1 goal, 1 assist), sophomore **Nate Squire** (3 goals) and freshman **Jacob Joseph** (3 assists) helped fuel a Mule offense that scored 52 goals on the season.

Defensively, sophomore **Kyle Plifka** and freshmen **Ryan Barlotta** and **Jonathan Schauer** teamed with Cecconi and Eric Williams to form a defensive unit that allowed a mere 0.64 goals per game.



Eric Williams was a second-team All-CC selection on a defense that allowed only three goals in nine league games.