

"Center Circle"
Issue 41 - July 18, 2005

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1) ARMCHAIR MIDFIELDER [Top 10 Under 10 Women]

A monthly column about the State of U.S. Soccer that takes a hard look at everything from the performance of the U.S. National Teams to pro soccer in the good 'ole U-S-of-A. If you're looking for a viewpoint that you won't see in a generic, nuts-and-bolts U.S. Soccer press release, you've come to the right place.

The cap numbers of some of the veteran U.S. Women's National Team players are legendary. In fact, no less than 17 players have busted the 100 cap level and five have kept right on going past 200. With all those caps, there hasn't been as much room for younger players on the field for the U.S. Women's National Team in the past decade, but times are a-changin'. With the U.S. Women's Youth National Teams among the strongest in the world, the young talent coming up through the ranks is impressive. U.S. head coach Greg Ryan has many months to prepare and choose his team that will attempt to qualify for the 2007 Women's World Cup, and ultimately head to China for what may be one of the most spectacular tournaments ever, giving plenty of time for young players to emerge. But who are the young players who may make their first splash on the world's stage in 2007?

You see where we're going, don't cha? In the last edition of Center Circle we had the top 10 Men's National Team Players under 10 caps and this month it's our WNT edition of the "Top 10 Under 10."

If you don't agree with us (what's new?), give us your feedback or even your own "Top 10 Under 10." Maybe we'll post your list, maybe we'll just point and laugh at it (heck, you'd never know), but we'd like to hear from you. E-mail us at centercircle@ussoccer.org.

In alphabetical order:

Nicole Barnhart (Goalkeeper) - 3 caps

How many goalkeepers have earned their first cap for the full Women's National Team as a field player? Just one: Nicole Barnhart. But that wacky start to her national team career (when the USA ran out of subs in a 2004 Fan Celebration Tour match and she played the final four minutes as a forward) should soon be just a fun career footnote as the 5-foot-10 former Stanford All-American continues to develop. While she has just two caps (in goal), one at the 2005 Algarve Cup and one against the Ukraine on July 10, both were shutouts, and her extensive experience in the nets for the U.S. U-21s should prove invaluable as she works her way into the rotation with the senior team. Tall and rangy, Barnhart is a big presence in goal that makes the net seem smaller to opposing forwards. She will play in her fourth consecutive Nordic Cup tournament this summer with the U-21s, but may have minor knee surgery after the tournament, which could sideline her for a few months.

Amy LePeilbet (Defender) - 7 caps

The hard-nosed defender earned her first six WNT caps in 2004, playing in the Four Nations Tournament in China, the CONCACAF Olympic Qualifying tournament in Costa Rica and the Algarve Cup in Portugal. Whether her future is in the center of the defense, where she has played most of her career, or at outside back, remains to be determined. She made her first start in a 2-0 win against Canada in China on Feb. 3, 2004, and earned her first cap and first start of 2005 against Canada on June 26, going the distance at right back. LePeilbet earned some valuable experience as a member of the USA's 2004 Olympic Residency Training Camp and is looking to entrench herself into the squad in 2005. She was a key player in the center of the defense for the U.S. U-21s at the 2002 and 2003 Nordic Cups while playing every minute of every game in both tournaments. The former Arizona State All-American did not miss a start in her four years for the Sun Devils, and is a world-class ball-winner on the ground and in the air.

Carli Lloyd (Midfielder) - 1 cap

With good size, great skills and a thunderous shot, Lloyd has been a top player on the U.S. U-21s for the past several years, but earned her first call-up for the U.S. Women's National Team match against Ukraine on July 10, to get her first cap. The former Rutgers star trained briefly with the USA during the 2004 Olympic Residency Camp and showed well, but most of her WNT experience has come with the U-21s. She will attend her fourth Nordic Cup this summer. A rare player in the women's game who can put opponents behind her on the dribble in the center of the field, Lloyd is looking to shoot anytime she gets within 30 yards of the goal, and U.S. goalkeepers can tell you she hits one of the heaviest balls on the U.S. team. With a U.S. midfield packed with talent, it may be difficult for Lloyd to get quality minutes, but her unique attacking qualities should get her an opportunity over the next two years.

Stephanie Lopez (Defender) - 1 cap

The crafty left-footer played every minute of all six matches at the 2004 FIFA U-19 Women's World Championship, and picked up both assists in a 2-0 win over Australia in the quarterfinal match. She earned her first call-up and first cap at the 2005 Algarve Cup in Portugal, coming on as a sub against Denmark. Silky smooth with her skills and a great positional defender, Lopez could be part of the new breed of U.S. outside backs who are

equally as adept at stopping goals as creating them. Able to beat players down the line and bend in dangerous crosses from the left flank, Lopez also has experience in the middle of the field where she played every game for the University of Portland as a freshman in 2003. She sat out the 2004 season to play in Thailand, but will return to the Pilot back line this fall when they may have one of the best teams in the NCAA Division I.

Jill Oakes (Midfielder) - 1 cap

The remarkably nimble Oakes was a star on the USA's 2002 U-19 team that won the world championship, playing in the middle of the defense. She scored the clinching goal against Germany in the semifinal of that tournament on a brilliant left-footed strike from outside the penalty box. She had 20 caps with the U.S. U-19s, has 12 caps with the U.S. U-21s and earned her first full national team cap at the 2005 Algarve Cup in Portugal, coming on against Denmark. Able to play in the central defense or defensive midfield slot, Oakes is a rising senior at UCLA who recovered from a major knee injury at the end of her freshman season and is sure to be one of the top college players in the country this fall. She will attend her third Nordic Cup this summer with the U-21s. In her first Nordic Cup in 2001 as a high school senior, she came off the bench to score a late tying goal against Germany that sent the USA to the championship game, where the Americans dismantled Sweden, 6-1.

Leslie Osborne (Midfielder) - 9 caps

The senior member of the "Top-10 Under 10" club with nine caps, Osborne was a member of the USA's 2004 Olympic Residency Camp, earning her first nine caps and six starts during the year. A key member of the USA's 2002 Under-19 World Championship team, she scored two big goals in the first round (against England and Australia) and played a part in the "golden goal" that beat Canada in the title game, slipping the pass behind the defense during the movement which led to the goal. She finished her U-19 career with 21 caps and four goals, but also has eight caps with the U.S. U-21s and played on the 2003 Nordic Cup championship team. She helped the Santa Clara Broncos to the NCAA Final Four as a senior in 2004 while playing on shredded ankle ligaments. She had major ankle surgery in 2005 which has kept her out for most of the year, but got her first WNT call-up this year for the training camp in Los Angeles in July and will be looking to re-establish herself as perhaps the heir to the defensive midfield slot currently owned by Shannon Boxx.

Nandi Pryce (Defender) - 8 caps

The former UCLA All-American has not played in a game for the full national team since 2000, but was a rising star at that time before a broken leg gave her struggles for two years. She has been in the last two U.S. Women's National Team training camps and should add some depth to the center of the defense in 2005 that features the rock-solid Kate Markgraf and Cat Reddick. Pryce, an alternate on the 2000 Olympic Team, worked her way back to the national team through action with the U-21s in 2002 and 2003, helping the USA win both Nordic Cups. Tall, strong and fast, Pryce is part of the new wave of ultra-athletic defenders, who are in high demand due to the improvement in athleticism of forwards all over Europe. The co-Pac 10 player of the Year in 2003 as she

helped lead the Bruins to the NCAA Final Four, Pryce can play at outside back, but might be most effective in the middle, where she patrolled for the Bruins.

Amy Rodriguez (Forward) - 2 caps

The explosive forward has experienced a meteoric rise through the national team programs, going from the U-17s to the U-19s to the U-21s to the full WNT in about a year. "A-Rod" earned her first two caps at the 2005 Algarve Cup, playing as a sub against Finland and Denmark, and performed well as the youngest player on the roster. Still age-eligible for the 2006 FIFA U-20 Women's World Championship, she was a key member of the U.S. U-19 team that participated in the 2004 FIFA U-19 Women's World Championship in Thailand. As the only uncapped player on the roster heading into the tournament, she scored in her first game in Thailand against South Korea and finished the tournament with two goals and two assists. Rodriguez, the 2004 Gatorade and *Parade* Girl's High School Player of the Year, will attend USC in the fall. Possessing a low center of gravity combined with a lightning quick first step, great touch on the ball and tremendous strength, Rodriguez should be tough for defenses to contain for years to come.

Kelly Schmedes (Forward) - 4 caps

One of the top youth national team players in U.S. history, she helped lead the USA to the 2002 FIFA U-19 Women's World Championship as part of the new "Triple-Edged Sword" that also included fellow forwards Heather O'Reilly and Lindsay Tarpley. She ended her U-19 career with 31 goals in just 19 full international matches, including nine goals in just five matches in Canada (she sat out one game at the world championship) and earned the Silver Boot as the second leading scorer in the tournament and the Bronze Ball as the third most outstanding player. Schmedes has earned all of her senior team caps at the Algarve Cup, three in 2002 (where she scored in her first-ever WNT match against England) and one in 2005. She was to play in her second Nordic Cup this summer in Sweden (she scored three goals in four matches in 2004 to help the USA to the title), but suffered an injury. Now she'll look for more WNT call-ups after tearing up the USL W-League so far this season with the Charlotte Lady Eagles. Formerly Kelly Wilson, the two-time All-American at Texas got married last April.

Angie Woznuk (Midfielder) - 0 caps

The only uncapped member of the "Top-10 Under 10," the attacking midfielder is brimming with talent, if not experience. Woznuk was one of the stars on the USA's U-19 team that took third at the 2004 FIFA U-19 Women's World Championship in Thailand last November, slicing open defenses with her passing and penetrating dribbling. She won the Silver Ball as the second most outstanding player in the tournament and the Bronze Boot as the third-leading scorer, pounding in three goals, including a blast from distance against Brazil in the third-place match, with three assists. She suffered a foot injury in that tournament which eventually required surgery, but she is back at almost full fitness and trained with the USA in Portland in the beginning of July as a practice player. Unable to play with the U-21s this year as she rehabbed her foot, she got her first official call-up to the full National Team for the camp in Los Angeles in late July. She sat out her

second season at the University of Portland last year to play in Thailand, but will be a key player for the Pilots this fall as they shoot for their second NCAA title.

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“BEHIND CLOSED DOORS”

A section that will let you get to know the real personalities of your favorite Men’s, Women’s and Youth National Team players through various funny and unique first-person accounts. In this issue, you’ll find:

2) IN 3’s (w/ MNT Defender Frankie Hejduk)

What’s it going to be? Door number one, door number two, or door number THREE?!? Okay, so this section has less to do with “Let’s Make A Deal” and more to do with the Multiple Choice section of an SAT test. “In 3’s” peeks inside the head of a select National Team player as they pick one of three choices for 25 questions about personal tastes and pop culture.

U.S. Men’s National Team defender Frankie Hejduk wasn’t all soccer, all the time growing up. Living in San Diego, the wanna-be Rastafarian was as much into catching waves as he was into shutting down defenses with his tenacious D. Like, totally lucky for us dude, the former high school surfing champion put aside his love for carving (at least temporarily) and for the past 10 years has provided the U.S. Men’s National Team with speed on the flanks and a tireless work rate. As he helps the U.S. down the final stretch of 2006 World Cup qualifying, he’s no doubt hoping he’ll find himself in Germany in a year, and possibly catching the equivalent to a killer wave on the soccer field as they attempt to improve on their quarterfinal appearance in 2002.

Miscellaneous:

Favorite place you’ve lived in the U.S.: San Diego, Miami, or Columbus, Ohio?

“San Diego. Good waves, and sunny all the time.”

Best hairstyle you’ve had over the years: Dreads, California surf mop or close-cropped?

“I liked my dreads. It was pretty nasty. Those were the good old days.”

Most memorable goal scored with the Men’s National Team: First against Guatemala, strike against Mexico in Nike U.S. Cup ’99 in San Diego or game-clinching goal against Mexico in Nike U.S. Cup 2000?

“The San Diego game, because it was in front of my hometown. It’s always good to score when all your bro’s are there. Plus, they were psyched for the goal celebration dance.”

Best pre-game ritual: sleeping, listening to music or just relax?

“Jamming to tunes relaxes me. Stuff that’s definitely pretty mellow, like Bob Marley or Jack Johnson.”

Favorite thing to do on the road: play cards, do crosswords or read a book?

“Play cards. I like to play hearts, but lately we’ve jumped on the Texas Hold ‘Em bandwagon. We usually have a good group of players.”

Average percentage of crosswords you complete: 30 percent, 50 percent or 80 percent?

“80 percent. You didn’t say when they have to be completed, right?”

You can choose one place in the world to surf for the day, where are you catching waves: Hawaii, Mexico or Costa Rica?

“Those are good choices. I’d say Mexico – Cabo San Lucas. Good waves, warm water, hot weather and cold beer. It doesn’t get much better than that.”

Best surfer lingo: brah, dude or righteous?

“Dude. It’s second nature to me. I don’t even know I’m saying it anymore.”

Professional sport your son Nesta will most likely play when he gets older: Soccer, surfing or golf?

“I’d say soccer. He’s already running around crazy, chopping kids down. He’s following in my footsteps. The parents on the other team never like him. That’s when I know he’s doing good.”

Food:

Favorite type of non-American food: Mexican, Italian or Chinese/Asian?

“Mexican. Carne Asada burrito with guacamole. There’s a little place in my hometown called Las Olas. When I go home, I go surfing first and then straight to Las Olas.”

Best place to get a cup of coffee in Columbus: Insomnia, Cup O’Joe or Starbucks?

“I’m a Starbucks guy. I’ve got my own Starbucks espresso machine at home, so I’ve got my personal stash.”

Number of cups of coffee you are drinking in one day: One, three or ahh...keep going?

“I drink between 8-10 espressos a day. I start every morning with a quad shot.”

Fast-food joint you’re going to for burger and fries: In-N-Out, McDonalds or Burger King?

“In-N-Out, no doubt. I love the toasted buns.”

You’re in charge of providing dinner: Making a meal, hitting the frozen pizza or going out?

“Going out. Definitely. I make a pretty mean boiled rice. That’s about it.”

Sports:

Best sports team in Columbus besides the Crew to watch live: Buckeyes, Blue Jackets or minor league baseball Clippers?

“I like the Blue Jackets. Hockey games are pretty sweet. It’s a new arena, and you’re right on top of the ice. Everyone gets all intense at the games.”

Best professional surfer: Kelly Slater, Taj Burrow or Laird Hamilton?

“The best right now is Kelly Slater. He’s won something like seven world titles. He’s the best in small wave surf and big wave surf. He’s not limited to just one kind. But my favorite surfer was Tom Curren.”

Superstitions on day of game: Have one, have more than one or don’t have any?

“None, really.”

Television/Movies/Video Games

Reality show you’d like most to be on: “Survivor,” “The Amazing Race” or “American Idol”?

“The Amazing Race. It’s the one I think I could win. It would be cool traveling to different cities, and there’s lots of running involved. That’s something I’m pretty good at.”

Best surfing movie: “Point Break,” “Endless Summer” or “Blue Crush”?

“‘Endless Summer.’ It’s a classic. It was the first movie that broke through for surfing.”

Funniest animated series: “Simpsons,” “Family Guy” or “South Park”?

“That’s a good one. I’d say ‘South Park.’ I can’t wait to see how Kenny dies every time.”

Toughest Super Mario Bros. video game on Nintendo to conquer: Original, 2 or 3?

“I think 2 was the hardest.”

Music:

Favorite Bob Marley song to dance the “skank” to: “Jammin,” “No Women No Cry” or “Get up, Stand up?”

“‘Get up, Stand up,’ for sure.”

You become blessed with amazing musical talent. What career are you pursuing: member of a boy band, solo artist or lead vocal in band?

“Lead vocal in a band. Just ‘cause you can rock out so hard. I’d be in a rock and roll band, just to see what the lifestyle is like. It’s sounds pretty cool.”

Of the current top selling albums, the one most likely to be in your CD player right now: “X & Y” (Coldplay), “Monkey Business” (Black Eyed Peas) or “Breakaway” (Kelly Clarkson)?

“None, dude. Right now I’m doing a mix. I’ve got a six CD-changer. I usually do two reggae, two rock and two rap. Just depends on the mood I’m in. The pre-party is usually rock, at the party is rap, and the after-party is reggae.”

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3) GEAR GALORE (MNT/WNT Posters)

In this section, we’re giving you an inside look into the latest soccer gear by spotlighting a different U.S. Soccer product each month, from the newest, state-of-the-art Nike apparel to all kinds of other exclusive U.S. Men’s & Women’s merch.

Listen up. We’ve gotten your emails. There’s no need to send anymore. We get it.

You “desperately” want Landon Donovan to come to your birthday. It would be “the best thing ever” and “totally awesome” if DaMarcus Beasley or Eddie Johnson came to your club game. You’d “freak out” if Abby Wambach and Shannon Boxx showed up at your high school practice.

To be quite honest, we can’t take it anymore, so we’re giving you what you want. Heck, we’re providing you with more than you asked. Center Circle is putting Landon, DaMarcus, Eddie, Abby and Shannon all in your house, apartment, condo, boat, trailer home, wherever you want. Just name the place and provide us with the address and they will be there...guaranteed.

The only catch is they won’t talk, move or...ah...be three-dimensional. Alright, so it’s a poster of the players and not the actual living, breathing super athletes. But hey, you never specified. Plus, once you see the posters, you won’t be disappointed.

There are two Nike “Just Do It” posters – one each for the MNT and WNT – and you better get your hands on them when you can because only a limited amount have been produced.

The MNT’s poster features all three of the above-mentioned young superstars in action. Wearing their Nike jerseys, Landon, Beas and EJ are spread out on a large 30x36-inch image and seem to almost jump off the page.

The WNT’s poster is two in one, as you get Abby on one side and Shannon on the other, allowing you to flip between the “scoring machine” and “iron woman” whenever you want. Both pictures are set upon a beautifully watermarked background and include the inspirational words...well, buy the poster and find out.

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4) “MAKING IT TO THE SHOW” (w/WNT Midfielder Jill Oakes)

Jill Oakes was part of that very special team that won the first-ever FIFA world championship for youth women in 2002. A rising star in the U.S. youth ranks, a severe knee injury derailed her career for almost a year, but she battled back to earn her first cap with the full Women’s National Team in 2005. A key member of this summer’s U-21 Nordic Cup Team, there were times when Oakes thought she might never again wear the U.S. jersey. She was wrong. And the U.S. Women’s National Team is better for it.

Of all the adjectives one could use to praise a defender in women’s soccer, perhaps “Fawcett-like” would be the ultimate compliment.

Meet Jill Oakes.

Oakes, a starting central defender on the U.S. team that won the 2002 FIFA Under-19 Women’s World Championship, is always calm on the ball despite the pressure swirling around her. She plays simple, yet productive passes, seems to always be on balance and is often in such good position that she rarely has to scramble to clear a ball because she has already defused the danger before it happens.

She is soft-spoken and even quiet, but a good leader and organizer in the back. She never goes to the ground unless she needs to, but when she does, always gets a piece of the ball. She wins her share of headers and will even get you a goal sometimes.

Sound familiar?

Of course, Joy Fawcett retired last fall with 239 caps and four world championships on her resume, while Oakes has one cap and is just starting to break into the national team, but the rising senior at UCLA (where Fawcett coached for five seasons) just feels fortunate to be back on track to the highest levels.

After a commanding performance in Canada at the U-19 world championship, Oakes headed into her freshman year at UCLA and was having an impact season when she tore the PCL in her right knee in a 1-0 second round playoff win in the NCAA Championships over cross-town über-rival USC.

The rare posterior cruciate ligament injury is the little known sister to the dreaded ACL tear, but ironically, the rehabilitation process can be more difficult.

It took Oakes almost 10 months to get back playing, not seeing action again until the first few matches of her sophomore season, and even then, she didn’t feel comfortable until the following spring.

“There were some complications that came up and some extra surgeries,” said Oakes of her long road back to the field. “With the ACL, a lot of people can start walking and bending the leg right away. My leg was locked for a few weeks, some scar tissue built up, and I had lots of issues with flexion. I had to go back in and have it cleaned out. In the

rehab process, I couldn't do anything with my hamstring because it would aggravate the PCL. There were just a lot restrictions."

Oakes, a serious soccer player from a very young age who had always excelled with the youth national teams, admits there were many times during the painful rehabilitation process that her dedication to the game wavered.

Many negative thoughts battled in her mind with positives ones – 'Is my soccer career over? Is this all worth it?' – and often the negative won out.

"It was probably the hardest thing I've had to deal with," said Oakes. "Just because it was long and painful and it made me get used to not playing. By the time I was in the middle of it, I was second guessing if I wanted to go through all the hard work. I was at a crossroads, I guess, but I made it through."

Oakes admits she was dragged, cajoled and pushed to see the big picture by her family, her UCLA teammates, her boyfriend at the time and her college coach, Jillian Ellis.

"I had a lot support and they just kept my head on straight and kept me going," said Oakes, who has four sisters and a brother. "Every time I would start to slip away, Jill (Ellis) would get on my case. I would miss a rehab session or be late because my heart wasn't into it, but Jill would always be there to keep me in line. My trainers and doctors were awesome, and my friends at school were huge, but Jill was a key person. She kept me thinking about how much I loved soccer and my long term goals."

"We had some real heart-to-hearts, and I asked her write to down what her goals were," said Ellis, who is also the head coach for the U.S. U-21 Women's National Team. "I told her, 'I can help push you to your goals, but I can't want this for you. You need to want it yourself.' On her essay, she wrote that she wanted to play in the Olympics and Women's World Cup, so I pushed her. I sat in a room when she was cranking her leg during her rehab and screaming. It was very tough. A few months ago we had a chat and I said, 'Can you imagine where you were, and look where you are now?' It says a lot about her work ethic and what kind of a person she is."

Oakes admits her sophomore season wasn't her best, but she was satisfied to be back on the field. "She was thinking about red-shirting," said Ellis. "But I knew we just needed to throw her in the deep end and let her swim. And that's what she did." As the season progressed, her play improved, and so did her confidence. During her junior season in 2004, she returned to her pre-injury form, helped UCLA to the NCAA Final Four, earned Second-Team All-American honors and a starting spot on the 2004 U.S. Under-21 Women's National Team that won its sixth straight Nordic Cup.

Oakes was finally back, a fact validated by her call-up to the full Women's National Team for the 2005 Algarve Cup, where she earned her first cap against Denmark.

“I did view it as a sort of culmination,” Oakes admitted of her call-up. “Before I got injured, I felt that I was heading in that direction and that my time would come. I thought eventually I would get a chance with the full team, but when I got injured I wasn’t sure I would ever be that good again and I thought that maybe I’d missed my shot. It was just really exciting to be brought back in. I feel I am back to where I wanted to be.”

Oakes will play in her third Nordic Cup with the U-21s this summer in Sweden, and first under her mentor Ellis, earning a starting spot in the central defense. She played as a holding midfielder in her first cap with the national team.

“That was awesome,” said Oakes of her debut. “I definitely wasn’t expecting to go into the game. My heart was racing. I got to go in for Shannon Boxx, and I’ve always loved the way she plays so it was cool to be able to go in for her. It would have been so sweet if I had scored, but just getting to play was a highlight enough. It was a good first cap.”

So whether Oakes’ future is in the back or the midfield, it is difficult to say. She will likely see more time on the back line for the Bruins in the fall, but also loves the challenges that playing midfield presents.

“I’ll play wherever they want me to play, but my favorite position is the holding midfield,” said Oakes. “It’s the best of both worlds because you’re holding down the defensive responsibilities which I feel I’m stronger at, but you still have the option to go forward every now and then and be a bit more creative than when you’re in the back.”

Oakes gives huge props to her experience with the U.S. U-19s, and then-head coach Tracey Leone, for opening her eyes to the international game. It was there that she developed the hunger and love that perhaps helped her to cling to her career when she wanted to hang up her boots after surgery.

“I think it kind of got me ready (to make the jump to the national team),” said Oakes of her two years with the U-19s. “It built my confidence up. I was starting on that team and I saw what it took to prepare for an event like a world championship. It required discipline, focus and hard work and showed me that you must maintain that over a long period and be willing to commit to the team well in advance of even knowing if you’re going to make the team. That’s what got me really focused in soccer and wanting to make the next step. To invest that much time in something, it had to be worthwhile and I found out that it was.”

Oakes will turn 21 at the Nordic Cup, a literal and symbolic coming of age as she enters her final season of college soccer. She knows that her experience at the U-19 and U-21 levels, and in a top program at UCLA, has prepared her for the next step. She doesn’t know when it will come, or even if it will, but she feels that when the opportunity presents itself, that she, her knee and her mind will be ready.

“It’s weird coming into my senior season,” said Oakes, a Psychology major. “I really want to go out with a bang this season, so I am focusing a lot on UCLA. After that, I’d

love to work my way into the full team, but I know that process to prove yourself at that level takes a long time. All I can do is just keep going for it and do the best I can. My goal ever since I was little was to play in an Olympics. That's something I've been in awe of and would love to be a part of. Now that I've grown up in the soccer world and have learned about the World Cup, that would be awesome too, and I know all the people who supported me through my injury would be proud."

So would Joy Fawcett.

###

5) BACK THAT THING UP! (75th Anniversary of First World Cup Match)

With U.S. Soccer always looking toward the future with World Cups, Olympics and Youth World Championships on the horizon, we've gone to the National Soccer Hall of Fame in Oneonta, N.Y., to create this section for a chance to pop it in reverse and look back at an interesting or enlightening part of U.S. Soccer's history that you may have forgotten or possibly never knew.

When did we play our first World Cup game? Hey, that's right! How did you...ah, wait, you just looked at the section subhead, subtracted 75 from 2005 and voila, you got 1930. Sneaky, my friend. You might have figured out the year, but what else do you know? Not much, huh? That's what we thought. Center Circle be bringing it old school. Sit back and be learned.

It was Friday the 13th, and a foggy one at that, but any fear they might have felt was probably kept for exactly a month later.

Sixteen young men from New York, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, St. Louis, Cleveland, Detroit, and other small cities along the East Coast boarded the S.S. Munarago that Friday, June 13, 1930, in Hoboken, N.J., and set sail for Uruguay.

After 18 days, the Munarago docked at Montevideo. The first U.S. Men's World Cup Team stepped off the ship and into a heavy downpour. They were there to test themselves against the world's best soccer players, but at that moment they were just trying to stay dry. Twelve days later, on July 13, they would play their first match in the inaugural World Cup.

The first World Cup in 1930 in Uruguay was not the enormous spectacle it is now, 75 years later. In fact, a number of European countries declined to take part because of the length of time the players would be away from home, which would have been up to two months due to the travel there and back, plus the almost three weeks required to play the competition.

The tournament was originally scheduled to be a sudden-death format involving 16 teams, but due to the lack of teams – only 13 participated – the concept was abandoned in

favor of a pool system. Four groups were set up with three groups of three and one group of four. The U.S. was drawn into one of the groups of three with Paraguay and Belgium.

With a week-and-a-half before their opening match, the U.S. players did their best to become comfortable with each other on the field. Head coach Robert Millar held strenuous practices, rain or shine, with the former being the usual as the day they arrived was the 92nd day in a row the people of Uruguay had felt raindrops.

The day before facing Belgium, the U.S. team was anxious and curious to find out how they'd fare against the rest of the world, while outside the team no one gave them much of a chance in the tournament.

That would all change after 90 minutes.

As the U.S. and Belgium took the field on the opening day of the World Cup, snow fell on Montevideo for the first time in five years. The field was a bed of wet, sticky clay and puddles of water were scattered throughout, making for a treacherous field, but one that in the end would benefit the U.S.

After a nervous first 20 minutes, the U.S. settled down and eventually took the lead when Bart McGhee pounced on Billy Gonsalves' shot that rebounded off the crossbar, blasting a one-timer past the Belgium 'keeper in the 40th minute. The U.S. never looked back as captain Thomas Florie scored the second before halftime and Bert Patenaude chalked up the final tally midway through the second half.

With their 3-0 victory, the U.S. was the surprise team of the tournament. But any new local supporters might have held their tongue as their next opponent was Paraguay, considered the "dark horse" for the championship as they had eliminated both Argentina and Uruguay in the South American championship a year earlier.

Four days later (July 17) in their second match, the U.S. put the favorites on their heels with two goals in the first 16 minutes, with Patenaude finishing off crosses from Andrew Auld. Patenaude wasn't done for the day though as he buried one more goal later in the match to give him the first-ever hat trick in a World Cup.

In two matches, the Americans had gone from unknown to possible World Cup champion. The U.S. was on to the semifinals, still the farthest they've ever advanced in a World Cup, but standing in their way was Argentina, which was considered one of the strongest teams.

The two teams met in the newly constructed Centenario Stadium, possibly not a good omen for the U.S. The Americans were torn down by injuries and without being able to make substitutions in those days they were forced to play with 10 men, and eventually crashed out of the tournament with a 6-1 loss.

Four minutes in goalkeeper James Douglas suffered a twisted knee and had to play the

rest of the game virtually on one leg. In the 19th minute, midfielder Raphael Tracy suffered a broken leg, but continued to play the rest of the first half as the injury was not detected until halftime. Down to 10 men, it got even worse in the second half when Auld endured a serious head injury and had to play the majority of the game with a rag stuffed in his mouth. As the injuries mounted, Argentina pulled away with five goals in the second half. The U.S. getting its only goal of the game from James Brown in the 89th minute.

With an impressive showing in the first World Cup, the U.S. stayed and watched the final a few days later as Uruguay defeated Argentina 4-2.

A little after 1 p.m. on August 5, the U.S. players boarded S.S. Cap Norte for their haul back north. They were no longer anxious, no longer holding any fear. They had paved the way for future generations, yet they probably didn't even know it.

###

6) MARK THAT CALENDAR

Summer Soccer Chore List

A stern reminder about an upcoming U.S. Soccer-related event, whether you plan to check it out live and in person, on the "telly" or that wacky world wide web.

Ahhhh...summer is here, everyone's favorite time of year. The weather is warm, there's a festival almost every weekend, and you're using those vacation days you've saved up to get away to the lake house.

Well, at least that's the first thing that comes to mind, but is it just us or does summer also mean more chores – mow the lawn, clear the gutters, wash the car, clean out the garage, dock the boat, tend to the garden, trim the hedges, water the yard, clean the pool, scrap off the burned remains from last year off the grill, invite a bunch of friends of the opposite gender to join you in the hot tub...wait. Okay, so the last one isn't so much of a chore, but it got us thinking. We're giving you a chore list you're going to like. It's a must attend/watch/follow on MatchTracker list of soccer games coming your way over the next month. Trust us, it will be the best list of chores you'll ever complete.

Summer Soccer Chore List

- 1. Watch the U.S. Men in Gold Cup** – The MNT has advanced to the semifinals of the 2005 CONCACAF Gold Cup, which means they need just two more victories for their third title in the regional tournament. The U.S. takes on Honduras on Thursday (July 21) at 6 p.m. ET at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J., and fans can follow the match live on Telefutera or on ussoccer.com's MatchTracker. If they get past Honduras it's on to the final against the winner of Colombia-Panama, which will take

place at Giants Stadium on July 24 at 3 p.m. ET, live on Telefutura.

2. **Get Ready for Mexico in Columbus** – The U.S. Men’s rematch with Mexico in 2006 World Cup qualifying is less than two months away and you better start planning if you want to be at Columbus Crew Stadium on September 3. Tickets go on sale starting Tuesday, August 2, at 10 a.m. ET, so mark it down in your calendar...seriously, mark it.
3. **Catch the WNT in Carson** – The U.S. Women’s National Team is continuing their initial preparations for China 2007 under new head coach Greg Ryan, bringing in a number of fresh faces as the old guard has retired and the youngsters are looking to pick up the slack. The next chance to see this new revolution take the field is on Sunday, July 24, when the Women face off against Iceland at The Home Depot Center in Carson, Calif. You can catch the match live on ESPN2 at 5 p.m. ET or follow it on ussoccer.com’s MatchTracker.

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7) CENTER CIRCLE VIDEO (Milbrett’s Path to 100)

Count to 100. We’ll wait...

(You aren’t counting are you? Fine, be that way.)

If you counted, you would have found out it takes a bit of time. Well, 30 seconds at least. But, now try and imagine scoring that many goals at soccer’s highest level.

For Tiffeny Milbrett it took about 12 years, nine months and 24 days (yeah, no chance we’re breaking down the hours, minutes, seconds). As you can see, it takes some time to join the century club, an exclusive plateau that only five other women have reached.

And over time, you (probably even Tiffeny) can tend to forget every goal. But, alas, that’s why we are here. You want to see her first goal scored abroad? Got it. How about her first World Cup goal? All over it. The 1996 Olympic gold medal winning goal? No doubt.

Did we track down every goal and put the video on ussoccer.com? No. (Reminder: It’s a HUNDRED goals!) But we do have 12 of the most memorable either due to the significance of the goal or just because it was a heck of a strike.

Read the goal description. Hit play. And enjoy.

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8) IN CASE YOU MISSED IT (U.S. Open Cup Third Round)

We understand. You have a life. Between your job, school, taking care of the kids, and hanging out with friends and family, you don't always get the chance to watch the other professional soccer leagues in the United States. That's why we're here. This section provides you with a quick recap of something exciting, intriguing or just off-the-wall going on in leagues like the MISL, USL (First and Second Division), PDL, W-League and Super Y-League.

Do you catch yourself rooting for the underdog? Of course you do. Why wouldn't you?

Everyone always talks about the great dynasties in sports like the Steelers, 49ers, Yankees, Bulls and even now the Patriots. I've got news for you: dynasties are boring.

Hey, the Patriots won again. Great. Can't wait to hear a bunch of heavy set guys with Boston Red Sox hats saying, "The Patriots are wicked good! Let's hit the bah and pahty!" Yeah, those guys are happy, but what about the rest of us?

We want upsets. We want to see the underdog pull it out. We want to know that, hey, maybe even the crappy team we cheer for has a chance.

And this is why we love the Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup, especially the round when the top division (Major League Soccer) joins the tilt. The appointed best teams (MLS) are going up against the teams considered to be inferior (USASA, PDL, USL 1 & 2) and every single match there's the opportunity to see David down Goliath.

Take Wednesday (July 13) as the first four MLS teams jumped into the mix – expansion clubs Real Salt Lake and Chivas USA, and the Chicago Fire and FC Dallas, the two non-playoff contenders a year ago. All four teams *should* win, right?

Didn't happen.

First of all RSL traveled to Minnesota to face the Thunder of the United Soccer League First Division and scored four goals...and lost! The Thunder, well-known to be a handful in the Open Cup, punched in a last minute goal to send the game into overtime and then put away two in overtime to collect a 6-4 win. The 2,218 people that saw this game live at James S. Griffin Stadium in St. Paul are a select few that will be able to say they saw one of the most exciting Open Cup games in memory. One giant knocked down.

The other expansion squad, Chivas USA, needed a goal in the final ten seconds of overtime to down the Charlotte Eagles of the USL Second Division. While the Eagles suffered an agonizing loss, the fans were treated to an outstanding performance by 'keeper Chris McClellan as he came up with 17 stops, most of which forced him to get dirty.

FC Dallas is ripping up MLS right now and certainly cruised against the Wilmington Hammerheads in their 3-1 victory. Not exactly. Even though Dallas was missing some of

their top players you would have expected the newly re-named club not to fall back into the doldrums of the past two years when they were the Burn, but they fell behind early and then needed two goals in OT to finish the job. Whew!

Well, at least the Fire were able to dominate their match and crush any hopes of a upset...er, maybe not. Chicago did control the majority of the match by getting two goals and an assist from spiky-haired Will John, but not before the stands at cozy Lusitano Stadium erupted when the Western Mass Pioneers (USL 2) took a 1-0 lead in the fifth minute.

Four matches, four possible upsets. That's why we watch.

P.S. You're in luck as there's still one more third round match between the Ocean City Barons (PDL) and Richmond Kickers (USL 1). Their game was delayed due to lightning and will be played July 19.

Oh, and then, expect the fourth round on August 3 to offer much of the same as the Portland Timbers (USL 1), Rochester Raging Rhinos (USL 1), Minnesota Thunder (USL 1), Richmond Kickers (USL 1) or Ocean City Barons (PDL) look to overthrow the higher seeds.

Watch for future updates as ussoccer.com will have keep you posted on everything going on in the tournament on the Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup competitions page.

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9) "YOU DON'T KNOW JACK (MARSHALL)" (Gold Cup Second Round)

Think you know your soccer trivia? We'll be the judge of that. Pop quiz: who the heck is Jack Marshall? Even the trivia buffs in the U.S. Soccer Communications Department would be hard-pressed to tell you that one Jack Marshall received his one and only cap way back in 1926. Okay, that was pretty much impossible. They get easier.

Questions

1: What politico and lifelong soccer fan helped score a visa for several visiting players in the 1996 Gold Cup?

2: Only one U.S. player has scored in the second round of consecutive Gold Cups. Which U.S. striker holds that distinction:

- A. Eric Wynalda
- B. Brian McBride
- C. Landon Donovan
- D. Preki Radosavljevic

3: What U.S. player was named the MVP of the 1998 Gold Cup despite not playing any of the USA's Group matches?

4: The U.S. has played all but one Gold Cup match on U.S. soil. Who was the opponent and where was the match played?

5: Eric Wynalda has held the U.S. career goal scoring record (now at 34) since tallying career goal No. 22 vs. Guatemala in the third-place game of what year's Gold Cup?

Answers

1. Henry Kissinger
2. B. Brian McBride with a goal vs. Colombia in 2000 in the quarterfinals and a hat trick vs. El Salvador in the 2002 quarterfinals
3. Kasey Keller
4. The U.S. traveled to Mexico City for the 1993 Gold Cup final and lost to Mexico 4-0.
5. 1996