

# Women's soccer find their form, success

By Heather Bickerton  
STAFF WRITER

The past two weeks have seen the Illinois Tech Women's Soccer team experience many highs and lows. After a slow and disappointing start to the season, the girls have definitely stepped up their game in recent weeks. On October 5, the team picked up their first conference win of the year with a strong and convincing 2-1 win over the University of St. Francis.

Only 8 minutes into the game, freshman Veronica Torres zoomed past the visiting defense and pulled the ball back to Junior Diana Otero, who calmly slotted the ball into the bottom corner of the goal. With the Hawks dominating possession, twelve minutes later senior Lauren Wissman lofted the ball into the middle of the box, where junior Heather Bickerton was on hand to head the ball into the back of the net. Going into the second half, IIT had several more chances but were unable to convert any into goals. In the final 15 minutes the home side lost concentration and the visiting team were able to score in the 83rd minute, however the Hawks managed to hold on to their lead to record a 2-1 win.

The following Saturday, the team travelled 45 minutes down the road to take on the #16 team in the nation, Trinity Christian, and despite an intense second half effort, lost

2-1. The Trolls got off to a great start, scoring two goals in the first ten minutes of the game, due to a lax start by the Hawks. The first half wasn't pretty with both teams losing the ball easily, and the score remained 2-0 at the half time mark. The Scarlet Hawks certainly picked up their game in the second half and took it to the Trolls. Throughout the field, good pressure was applied and a few chances were created by the visiting team. In the 89th minute, junior Diana Otero lofted in a corner ball, which was headed home by senior Lauren Wissman. Unfortunately for the Hawks, it was too little too late as they fell 2-1.

With a record of 1-3 it was vitally important that the girls got a result in their next game, and with a nearly flawless 90 minutes of soccer they posted just that, in a 3-0 win against Saint Xavier University.

The win by the Scarlet Hawks was their first ever versus Saint Xavier and the team was undoubtedly delighted with their result after the final whistle. The first ten minutes had the home side on their back foot, with the Hawks pressure certainly rattling the Cougars. It wasn't until the 41st minute, however, until the Hawks got their first goal of the game, when freshman Hailey Kunkel blasted a set piece from 45 yards out, which looked like it was going for a field goal until it dropped under the crossbar and into the back of the net.

The Hawks didn't let St. X back into

the game at any point in time, with the team controlling possession well and creating numerous chances. In the 79th minute, freshman Marit Tundal carried the ball into the box and with a few deflections, the ball found its way into the back of the net for the Hawks second goal. Seven minutes later, Tundal found herself on the edge of the penalty area and forced a save from the keeper, however, junior Heather Bickerton was on hand to slot the ball home to ice the game for the Hawks, 3-0. Grace Durbin posted the best celebration of the season so far as she jumped and screamed like a maniac, some might even say that she sounded like a dying swan, but after years of rivalry with the Cougars, the Scarlet Hawks finally had a victory to celebrate over their conference foes.

On Saturday the Hawks played at home against the Robert Morris University Eagles, ranked #20 in the nation, with the team turning in a fantastic performance to win the game 1-0. The match wasn't necessarily the prettiest, but it was a fantastic defensive display from the Hawks, which in the end gained them the win.

The pressure applied from the front and the midfield rattled the visitors straight from the whistle. Neither team could really create any solid chances on goal throughout the first half. In the second half, both teams certainly picked up their performances.

The Scarlet Hawks were definitely on

their back foot for a long period of the second half, but remained calm and collected, with Junior Jessica Carlson pulling off some fine saves to keep the home team in the game. In the 70th minute, the Hawks received a free-kick 35 yards out and crowded the box. Freshman Hailey Kunkel lofted a fine pass over the Robert Morris defence to which Junior Lauren Capuano managed to touch the ball past the approaching Eagles keeper to make the score 1-0.

The final 20 minutes were incredibly tense for the home side, with Robert Morris throwing everything at them. With seven minutes left, the Hawks went down to ten men and were definitely on the defensive. With constant pressure all over the field the Hawks held on to their 1-0 lead to record a fantastic result against the 20th ranked team in the nation, also producing their first win against Robert Morris in the history of the program.

With the win, the Lady Hawks have now improved their record to 3-3 in conference. The team travels to face Trinity International on Wednesday afternoon, and then returns to Stuart Field next Saturday at 5pm. The girls have definitely appreciated the support they have received over the past two weeks, support which has helped them to two home victories. Please tell your friends and get down to the games this Saturday at 5pm to support your Men's and Women's soccer teams!

Photos by Melanie Kato

