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Beyond Victory

Amy Fowler – Head Coach, Dartmouth Field Hockey

by
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A team of destiny? Perhaps. They began the season with three games in St. Louis, Missouri. A shutout victory in the opener, followed by a 3-1 win, and then another shutout. The home opener, against Ivy powerhouse Princeton, was a 3-1 loss, but they bounced back with a 5-0 blanking of Boston College, en route to an incredible 15-4 season. In her second year as head coach, Amy Fowler had led Dartmouth's 2001 field hockey team to an ECAC championship.

"The program here is up-and-coming," Coach Fowler says, and that's one of the reasons that she came back to Dartmouth, having been an assistant under Julie Dayton from 1994 to 1996. Ultimately, her goal for the team is to attain a consistent national ranking along with national recognition. "We'd like to be considered a perennial top 20 team." The next step would be an Ivy championship, which would allow the team to get an automatic bid into the NCAA Tournament. She's been there as an All-American for Iowa, and one can sense her determination as a coach to get Dartmouth's team there someday as well. The 2002 season begins at noon on Saturday, September 14, at home against Brown.



photo: Mark Austin Washburn

She says that coaches "serve the needs of the College and the athletes that we actively recruit. And I make it clear to my team that they have to take care of their academics first." Being on the road recruiting is "one of the pluses of the job", traveling and meeting different people. It frequently takes place during holidays, with Thanksgiving, Winter Break, and the Fourth of July being particularly busy times. Coaches attending a national regional tournament spend full days watching more than 150 high school and club teams playing on 27 different fields. Sometimes, it's just possible to see five or ten minutes of a game, and under those circumstances, it can be difficult to judge a player who's only touched the ball once or twice.

But what happens when Coach Fowler sees a superior talent? "We try to get to their coach right away. If it's at a tournament, NCAA rules prohibit us from talking to a player until after the tournament. The first thing we look for is where they are on the academic scale. It's our job to recognize talent and then get information about where they'll fit into our academic picture." She stays in contact with coaches via phone and email, and may visit players, have dinner with their families, and see them in their home environment. She doesn't necessarily recruit for position, but generally looks for certain skills that the team needs.

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She has a positive coaching philosophy, stressing that “throughout the entire season and preseason, we are a team—we win together, we lose together. I treat everyone on the team fairly, but I treat them as individuals as well and in a way that motivates them. We do team building and bonding during the preseason—something fun, like camping or kayaking. We sit down as a group and talk about strengths and weaknesses. What’s important in your life other than these things called ‘field hockey’ or ‘academics’? The student athletes at Dartmouth are multidimensional; they tend to get involved with many different things during their college experience.”

While continuing a winning tradition and establishing a nationally renowned program are key goals, Coach Fowler is also dedicated to aiding her players with “gaining confidence over the four years, learning what it takes to be part of a team and to work together while getting the life skills that it takes to do things on your own.” She clearly loves her job and is proud of the fact that “I can help them have a balanced experience while they’re getting one of the best educations in the country.”

A team of destiny. And most certainly one that makes Coach Amy Fowler “extremely happy to come to work each day!”