



SEASON OUTLOOK

.Having posted double-digit win totals in consecutive seasons for the first time in a decade, the high-scoring Saint Joseph's University field hockey team has its sights set on an Atlantic 10 title and first-ever NCAA Tournament appearance in 2006.

All-America candidate senior **Nicole Antonini** headlines a list of 14 returning letterwinners, including seven starters, who give SJU a shot at its first title since 1995.

Among the nation's premier scorers, Antonini is equally adept at finding the back of the cage or setting up her teammates. The two-time All-Mid-Atlantic Region selection already ranks second in career points (96) at SJU and stands third all-time in assists (22) and goals (37). The three-time All-League choice could become just the third SJU player to capture All-America honors if she comes close to matching her prolific 2004 and 2005 seasons. She tied for the team lead with 13 goals and topped the squad with 30 points as a junior.

While Antonini accumulates much of the attention, she receives plenty of support from classmates **Lauren Luft** and **Maureen Casserly**.

Luft followed up a breakout sophomore season in 2004 with an even more productive campaign as a junior. Named to the All-Atlantic 10 Conference First Team for the second consecutive season, the feisty forward finished third on the team in scoring with nine goals, seven assists and 25 points. She was also tabbed to the All-Philadelphia Field Hockey squad and Atlantic 10 All-Championship team.

A whirl of constant activity in the center of the field, Casserly has been touted as the team's unsung hero because of her durability, versatility and unselfish play. A starter in every game of her Hawk career, she finished fourth on the team in scoring with three goals and five assists as a junior. Among the A-10's most dynamic stickhandlers, she will be challenged to increase her scoring total in her final collegiate season.

In addition to this trio, the Hawks have the luxury of bringing several veterans off the bench, including Juniors **Maryann Reis** and **Theresa Barbati** and sophomore **Marisa Pizzi**. Reis is a solid stickhandler, Barbati has good size and presents a big target on the front line and Pizzi possesses speed to burn on the wing.

While the Hawks high-scoring attack receives much of the recognition, the team's underrated defense features an experienced core that includes juniors **Rebecca Cunfer**, **Katie Young**, **Brianne Miller** and **Charlsie Agro**.

The 2004 Atlantic 10 Rookie of the Year, Cunfer was solid in the cage as a sophomore after turning in one of the best seasons in program history as a freshman, finishing second in the A-10 and 19th nationally with



Seniors Nicole Antonini and Lauren Luft (above) power the Hawks high-scoring attack. Junior Katie Young (below) could earn All-Conference honors in 2006.

a 1.41 goals against average. The Academic All-Atlantic 10 selection already ranks among SJU's career leaders in shutouts.

Often overlooked because of her quiet demeanor, Young should finally be recognized as one of the Atlantic 10's elite players in 2006. Tabbed as the Hawks' Most Valuable Player and named to the A-10 All-Championship team as a sophomore, she has superior stickhandling ability and is frequently called upon to lock down an opponent's top offensive threat. A standout on the defensive wing, SJU may bring her up into the midfield to take greater advantage of her all-around skills.

Miller stepped into the starting lineup as a sophomore and provided a reliable presence along the back line. Injuries have slowed the progress of Agro, who possesses the ability to become a key contributor on the backline, as well as a heavy hit that could be a weapon on corners.

Junior **Brooke Henry**, stands as the lone returning regular in the midfield. A sparkplug with her constant activity, she should assume the role of the team's link out of the back.

A talented collection of newcomers should vie for immediate playing time. Headlining the group will be redshirt freshman **Mary Beaman** and true freshmen **Anne Schreuders** and **Jenn Schultz**. An athletic back, Beaman captured SJU's most improved player award despite not appearing in a game in 2005. Schreuders, meanwhile, arrives on U.S. soil after competing at the top club levels in the Netherlands. Schultz tallied 25 goals and 21 assists while guiding William Allen High School to the Pennsylvania state finals.

After posting double-figure win totals in consecutive seasons, expectations for the Saint Joseph's field hockey team are high. With Antonini headlining a high-powered attack and an underrated defense, a run at an A-10 title and NCAA Tournament berth are legitimate goals for the Hawks in 2006.

