Fútbol Finale

Men’s soccer star Aaron O’Neal looks to make senior season his best yet

How does a soccer player follow up a freshman year in which he led the team in points, earned conference Rookie of the Year honors, and scored three game-winning goals? The answer: play just as well in his sophomore season and emerge in junior year as one of the best players in the conference.

At least that’s the way senior captain Aaron O’Neal (CAS’11) chose to do it. The Virginia Beach, Va., native has made quite a splash since arriving at BU in 2007, and he has high hopes for his final season in scarlet and white.

O’Neal’s main challenge this year will be topping his 2009 success. The forward and midfielder registered a team-high 11 goals, ranked in the top 10 in America East in points, goals, and shots, and was named the team’s Most Valuable Player. As much as he would love his individual success to continue, O’Neal says, the team’s mission—winning the America East title this year—is far more important.

“My success as a player doesn’t mean anything, really,” he says. “I’d trade every goal I scored last year to get rid of the image of the seniors in the locker room when we lost in the playoffs.”

His team’s surprise loss (2-1) to the University of Hartford in the first round of the America East tournament shut down a roller-coaster season that saw the Terriers beat perennial soccer power St. John’s University, the number-one team in the country.

“Beating St. John’s was incredible,” O’Neal says. “Especially to do it at home and when they were ranked number one. Our confidence at that point in the season was so high. We felt like if we played the way we knew we were capable of, we couldn’t be stopped.”

“This year,” he says, “we want to win the conference. We have the talent to do it. There are certain guys that need to take on more responsibility now that they’re older. If that happens, we have a real good shot. The pressure is on us as a unit more than anything.”

He pauses. “Senior year. My last chance—all I’ve got.” DAN MERCURIO

WEB EXTRA
Alum Steven Mercurio talks about his work with Sting at bu.edu/bostonia.

In 2009, Aaron O’Neal (left) registered a team-high 11 goals and ranked in the top 10 in America East in points, goals, and shots.

Conducting Electricity

Alum Steven Mercurio helps Sting bring his pop music to worldwide audiences

When Sting decided to reinvent his catalogue of hits for a major orchestra, he knew exactly who he wanted behind the baton: Steven Mercurio. A composer and a conductor, who straddles both classical and popular music worlds, Mercurio was a natural fit to conduct the musical chameleon’s backup musicians for his most recent tour.

“This tour covered ground that’s never been covered before,” says Mercurio (CPA’80). “It needed somebody who could help Sting realize what his intentions were for the music.”

The resulting concert, called Symphonicity, took Mercurio and Sting—along with the 45-member Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra and the 45-member Celli, and the Three Tenors. Collaborating with Sting was an honor, he says, because the prolific rocker’s music “already has a theatrical element to it.” Sting is “a great observer of life and personalities.”

When he’s not on the road, Mercurio is working on a symphony about dogs and their owners, which he hopes to stage next summer at outdoor venues across the country.

“It’s his next attempt to bring orchestra to a wide audience, maybe even to other species. “Dog owners are fanatical, and to bring them together and let the orchestra be socially relevant would be a great thing,” he says.

KATIE KOCH