SPORTS

**Team defends America East crown this spring**

**Tennis**

Terriers Look to Stay on Top

Francine Whu is fierce and focused. Last year, Whu (CAS’10), cocaptain of the Boston University women’s tennis team, won First Team All-Conference America East honors for helping BU clinch the America East Championship in doubles with teammate Stefanie Nunic (CGS’10). She and Nunic beat Binghamton’s Lauren Bates and Jillian Santos, respectively, in the singles final and together in the doubles final. (Nunic was named the league’s Player of the Year and Rookie of the Year, as well as Most Outstanding Player at the America East tournament.) And at Dartmouth’s Big Green Invitational last semester, Whu came away with two singles victories.

Now in her last semester at BU, Whu plans to put the pressure on herself for her final season. She doesn’t intend to compete after college, so she wants to make every match count. “I started thinking about it in the fall,” she says. “It’s weird to think this is the first match of the spring, but it’s my last first spring match.”

The Terriers opened the season at Harvard on January 23 and will look to defend their America East crown this spring. The team has captured sixteen straight America East Championships, made eleven consecutive NCAA bids, and holds a nineteen-year undefeated America East record.

Head coach Lesley Sheehan (CGS’82, SED’84) says it’s tough keeping her team motivated through the regular season, which could stretch into May if the team makes another NCAA bid.

Sheehan, the first BU women’s tennis player to qualify for the NCAA tournament, during her junior year in 1983, has coached for twenty-four years. “It’s quite challenging,” she says. “In the early eighties, the game was much more about strategy, agility, placement, and really being versatile in the game. Now it’s all about power, taking the ball early, and how hard you can hit. I’m trying to work with my team to be patient.”

Whu first picked up a racquet when she was four, but didn’t seriously start practicing, with a coach on Staten Island, until she was nine. “Some kids start playing tournaments at eight or nine, but I think that’s a bit early,” she says. “I didn’t start playing more until I fell in love with tennis.”

Being a student-athlete has taught her leadership and time- and stress-management skills. Now she has her sights set on law school.

“When I graduate, I’ll miss tennis, but I’ll miss competing more,” says Whu. “I think that’s why I want to go into litigation.”

KIMBERLY CORNUELLE

Success for Women’s Soccer

The women’s soccer team won the America East Conference tournament for the third year in a row in November and made its fifth straight trip to the NCAA tournament. The Terriers’ season ended, however, with a double-overtime loss to Connecticut in the tourney’s first round. Their record for 2009: 14-6-2. Emily Pallotta (SMG’10) led the team with eight goals, was named America East Midfielder of the Year, and earned First-Team All-Conference honors. Pallotta (right) also was named to the 2009 NSCAA/adidas Women’s College Scholar All-America Third Team, one of the highest academic honors in women’s college soccer.