



International Soccer Club (ISC) member Ann Mitchell joins fellow players in pursuit of the ball (at left); Club president Wendy Coyle discusses team strategy with player Keith Burgess, whose T-shirt expresses ISC's motto best.

Improving soccer skills is a team effort

By DIANA YOUNKEN
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Soccer anyone? How about — soccer everyone?

For years soccer competition has been reserved for men's high school, college and professional teams, and women have had few, if any, opportunities to participate.

But the game that traditionally has been Europe's No. 1 pastime is fast becoming one of the most popular team sports for all ages in the United States, and it's not for men only.

At least that's the attitude behind the first and probably only coed soccer team in State College: the International Soccer Club (ISC).

"We're trying to eliminate the myth that women don't play soccer," according to Wendy Coyle, president of ISC, which was organized in spring 1970 by a group of foreign graduate students.

"In the past, soccer's been a man's sport," Coyle said, perhaps because "a lot of men are physically aggressive and a lot of women aren't."

At Penn State, women are excluded from playing in soccer intramurals or on the men's soccer team, Coyle explained, and the only soccer physical education course available to women is a combination of soccer and football.

"Before last winter there was no women's soccer anything," she added, "but apparently there's an interest."

The interest and enthusiasm of the 35

women who have joined the club is such that they have formed its backbone, Coyle said. "There have been times that if it were not for the women of the club, the club would be non-existent."

The men are just as enthusiastic about recruiting women members, according to Coyle, who until winter term was the only woman on the team.

Thus, ISC "is a social club as well as an athletic club," she said. "In the past it wasn't because there weren't any women. And maybe they're more serious about socializing than they are about soccer."

The club's social aspect is enhanced by the fact that people are eligible and encouraged to join no matter what their abilities, Coyle said. "We've got players who've never seen a ball before."

Many of the women who joined the club were beginners, and at first they were somewhat intimidated by the more experienced male players, Coyle said. And as with any organization, some members were less committed to learning new skills and showing up regularly for practice, she added.

But the women have "really got a head for soccer," she said. "They're eager to learn, they're excited, they'll listen to you."

ISC meets for practice at Pollock Fields every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday starting at 6 p.m., and according to Coyle, new members really work hard, with the veteran players' help, of course.

The club's women's division recently entered the State College town league, which is held every spring for about 12 local teams.

"The object of entering the women's team into the league was to give them an opportunity to have competition outside the University," according to ISC member Keith Burgess.

Although they won only the first game in the playoffs, the women did not become discouraged, according to Floyd Trunzo, another player. "There was an improvement in play and in confidence."

Helping the women improve their skills is a team effort, he said.

Both Burgess and Trunzo said that most women will have few problems playing against the men if they concentrate on building up basic soccer skills.

"It probably just comes down to a foot race," Trunzo said, explaining that most men run faster than women.

Noreen Tighe (13th-secondary education), one of the six women members this summer, said she's been playing soccer for three years and sometimes, "it gets kind of frustrating" playing with men. "You're lucky if you get the ball," she said.

Another player, Ann Mitchell (graduate-nursing) said she never played soccer before enrolling in the club, but she's getting the hang of it. "It's hard," she sighed.

Trunzo said one of the group's greatest concerns is organizing a regular playing schedule, perhaps by registering with the United States Soccer Federation.

"We think it'd be more beneficial to the club if we can show potential members who we plan to play," he said.

Who have they played so far? Since the club was formed, ISC has competed against college teams and ethnic clubs all over Pennsylvania and in New York, New Jersey, Washington D.C., and Maryland.

With increased funding and notoriety (they are supported partially by Associated Student Activities), the club hopes to play other countries, according to Trunzo.

ISC's own membership is unique in that respect, he said, for it includes players from several foreign countries: Trinidad, Greece, Malaysia, Iran, Turkey, Africa, Thailand, the Bahamas, and Germany.

"It's like a little United Nations," he said, "and you meet interesting people."

They often get together after a game to discuss strategy, see a movie, drink beer or eat watermelon, Trunzo added.

And it's clear that ISC members are linked by a common bond — a passion and determination for soccer that never quits, even in the face of injuries. "I've been put on crutches twice," Wendy Coyle proudly asserted, "but I always go back for more."



Unintimidated by her male teammates, Coyle executes a play.

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