

'Andy G' — Soccer captain leads by example

BY RACHEL JONES

"Aggressiveness." That's what Andrea Gillespie ("Andy G" to her friends) sees as her contribution to the Dalhousie Tigers soccer team. Others describe the 19-year-old second-year player as "experienced", "tough", "intense" and always "positive".

Gillespie began playing soccer at the age of six in Fall River, Nova Scotia because "everybody did it", and describes the team as typical mini soccer — "little kids running around, swarming around the ball." Years later, a 1995 CIAU Tournament All-Star in her first year, a Provincial team member at both the U-17 and U-19 levels, and, most recently, a member of Nova Scotia's Canada Games contingent, she's certainly very experienced.

"A lot of people believe that, in order to be captain, you need to be third-, fourth-, fifth-year, but I think she's a very good player and a good leader," coach Dara Moore states confidently. "Although she's only in her second year, she brings to the team a fair bit of experience from the Canada Games program as well as last year [at Dal]."

And there is no doubt about it, Dalhousie's captain is a force to be reckoned with on the field.

"She's always just nailing people," laughs teammate Amy Dunphy, shaking her head. As one of the few players on the team who have had the questionable pleasure of playing against Gillespie, Dunphy should know.

"She's very tough. She likes to tackle hard. She's a very attacking player. She's just tough to play against in general. She's fast too, deceptively fast. She's tough," concludes Dunphy, still shaking her head.

As for playing with Gillespie, Dunphy says, "She works hard all the time. She's gonna' give you everything she's got for 90 minutes. [She's] a good leader on the field, she talks you through things — very positive, very encouraging. You do something right and she'll tell you about it and if you do something bad, she'll find a nice way to tell you. [She is also] intense, strong, just a solid force on the field in general. She has the ability to pick a game up for a team."

"She's a really aggressive player, really intense. You can depend on her to go into a tackle hard, she always plays hard, with a lot of heart," adds teammate Mary-Beth Bowie, "that's the best way to describe Andrea."

Steve Hart, technical director for Soccer Nova Scotia and coach of the Canada Games team for the past two years, points out that all this aggressiveness comes from having the right mindset when you step out on the field.

"She has good fighting spirit — never seems to give up on any occasion, which is the correct attitude to have when you're in soccer. That's half the battle if your attitude is correct and she's got that."

And her attitude is always positive. "I think regardless of her performance, she's always there for her teammates," notes Moore when asked about what makes Gillespie dependable. "If she's struggling a little bit with her own game, she'll work hard to try to help the other players out, to pick the intensity up and to keep things positive on the field."

"Andrea's a lot of fun to be around," remarks Bowie smiling. "I roomed with her at Canada Games and she's just a fun, positive person. She makes a lot of situations a lot of fun. You could be totally secluded — a lot of times it happens at soccer tournaments [where]

you can't go out — but she'll make it a fun experience for you. She's just a good person."

Playing at both sweeper and centre-midfield positions, key positions for controlling the game, one of Gillespie's greatest assets to the team is her ability to read the play.

"For me, I thought she read the game really well," reflects Hart. "[She] anticipated situations more than just reacting to them. That's a big strength in the game." Add to this the ability to take that knowledge and communicate it to others.

"She knows the game very well, so she has the ability to sit back and read, especially when she's sweeping," echoes Dunphy. "She has the ability to see the whole field and know what's good for us as a team and be able to vocally get that across to the rest of us."

"She talks so much on the field it really guides a lot of players; [she] lets them know what they have to do," concurs Bowie. "She's not afraid to talk off the field if there's a problem. She's someone I think players feel they could go to with a problem because she's pretty open with things."

And, both coaches Hart and Moore agree, she's a great player too.

"She's a very good defensive player — one [on] one, she's very strong. She's strong in the air. She communicates with her teammates very well and she's a decent distributor of balls," says Moore.

"I certainly think she's got some areas to improve," she adds cautiously, a bit of a perfectionist herself, "but she's very strong in those areas. She's probably one of our best strikers of the ball."

"She's strong in the air," agrees coach Hart. "She's technically good, quite efficient, able to use both her right and her left foot. But I think most of all, her best qualities are in reading the game. She reads the game really well."

Yet Gillespie was surprised to be chosen to lead this year's Tigers.

"I never would have thought that — I don't see myself much as a leader — well, maybe by example — but I'm not very verbal off the field. But [Dara] picked me as captain and that's made me step up," says Gillespie, a little bewildered by all the attention. "I try to help everyone out by communicating, telling them what they can do and also try to lead by example. So, if I go into a tackle hard, I show others that they can go into a tackle hard and win balls. I just try to lead by example basically," she concludes, as if it were just that simple.

Gillespie seems to take for granted her positive, constructive communication on the field, her "fighting spirit" as Hart calls it, and her ability to see and read the game so well. She leads by example because all of these qualities are innately a part of her, qualities that are, as her teammates appreciate, not always easy to find in

players, let alone in one player.

More at ease with complimenting others, Gillespie is quick to praise the coaching of Moore and identifies that there are advantages to having a female coach who has played in this league and can relate easily to the players.

"She's been through it all, she knows a lot about the other teams," explains Gillespie. "She knows a lot about the game since she's experienced it herself."

"A tremendous will to win"

BY KATHLEEN MATTHEWS

Marc Rainford is playing his last year of varsity soccer at Dalhousie and, according to teammates and coaches, he has provided men's soccer with confidence, experience, skill, and leadership on and off the field.

Marc Rainford started playing soccer when he was four years old. It was always his first choice even though he had participated in other sports.

"It has always been soccer," he says, "that's it."

Rainford is a highly-talented 25-year-old defender from Pickering, Ontario studying in his last year of a Sociology degree. He has maintained a high level of athleticism throughout his soccer career at Dal, as '95 and '96 AUAA All-Star and as a member of the CIAU gold medal team in 1995.

A player as talented as Rainford could have had the pick of many schools, so why did he choose Dal?

"It's a good program," says Rainford. "[Ian Kent] brings out a professional mentality, he looks after every detail. From day one, in terms of your preparation, you feel like you are being treated properly, like a proper athlete would [be treated]. You feel as though you are a part of something good and you have to respect it."

Rainford believes that the soccer program at Dal has many benefits.

"It elevates you. Players come in, play soccer and have fun, and sometimes they think it's a joke, then they realize they can be good at something... [that] they have the potential to come out of something and have an impact on it."

"Our prior record is such that, when you come in, the program is so good that you don't want to come in and screw it up. You want to come in and say 'I want to add to it... it's my turn to make it better'."

There is no question that Rainford has contributed a great deal to men's soccer at Dal over the last four years, as his teammates and coach attest.

"He is very experienced," says co-captain Paul English. "He reads the game well and is a calming presence in the back that makes us more confident."

"He has amazing skill for a defender, more skill than you will probably see anywhere else on the field," says

When asked what she sees for the rest of the Tigers' season, Gillespie is confident.

"We're in a very tight division but if we keep going like we're doing this [past] weekend, we're winning our game. It's going to be close but I think we have a good chance of coming in the top two of our division for sure, and then moving on to AUAA's."

On her most memorable moment in soccer: "The whole Canada Games

experience was really good. It was fun, but it was just a little upsetting because we had a good team and we just didn't have any good luck. Things just didn't go our way. But it was fun, reflecting back on it. We didn't win or anything. We came in sixth, so hopefully the best is yet to come."

Tiger note: Andrea is cousin to former Dalhousie Tiger Kate Gillespie, and her sister Amy, plays for the St. FX soccer team.

veteran midfielder Dave McFarlane.

"He has a ton of composure. He gives everyone confidence because he is always talking, making everyone feel good."

"He is probably the greatest captain you could ever ask for," adds defender Jeff Hyles. "He is a leader and an example on and off the field."

"Personally, I have known him for a long time and he is a good person and a great friend, along with being the best sweeper I have ever played with. It has been a real pleasure playing with him the last four years," concludes Hyles, reflecting a sentiment that teammates seem to share.

Coach Kent feels lucky to have Rainford on the team.

"I think Marc Rainford as a player



photo by Jan Adams

brings calm, pride, and leadership," says Kent. "As a person, he is probably one of the nicest people I have ever met."

"He has sound morals and ethics. He brings maturity to the team that is much needed especially for the young kids. He helps on and off the field with teammates. I was lucky enough to get him three years ago; it was a stroke of luck and I have got nothing but praises

for him."

Coach Kent has high expectations for Rainford this year and no doubt he won't be disappointed.

"I expect the same as he has done for the last three years. He'll be there every day. He has a tremendous will to win. He keeps things in perspective."

"He battles with pain every game but he plays through it. He came back here this year with one thing in mind and that was to help us to be the best team we could be, to have the best possible showing at the Nationals, and he is a huge part of that."

The high expectations don't worry Rainford.

"I ask way more of myself than someone else would. So if you ask more of me, I am not scared to do it because, guess what — I want more to begin with. The only time you feel pressure is when you don't feel prepared."

Rainford also has high expectations for the team.

"I expect our team to continue our strong winning tradition. All of us work very hard. We want to win AUAA's and CIAU's. Winning is part luck, [but] the odds are greater if the attitude is right and if you have a team that believes in itself."

"It goes beyond winning," continues Rainford. "The most important thing is leaving a base behind so that the younger players can step in to fill the senior players' roles. Win or lose right now, we have to continue a competitive team."

"I have enjoyed this year a lot so far, but I can't think of a better way to end my soccer career at Dal than having the CIAU's at home," says Rainford, obviously excited and motivated for the Nationals. "Even if we win CIAU's again, the desire to be better should always be there. If you don't have that, then you will win only one National championship and that's it."

The loss of Marc Rainford will certainly be felt next year but, for the time being, we can continue to expect consistent quality play in back, and — who knows — maybe even another a gold medal.



Spin Zone
Online Magazine

www.spinzone.com

STUDENTS !!!!

SMT and Acadian Lines have
a DEAL for you !!!

Student Travel Pack
Buy 4 Tickets, get 2 FREE!!
Now Good For Travel In
New Brunswick, PEI and Nova Scotia!
Call Your Local Agent or Call

 **1-800-567-5151** 