University of Portland Pilots women's soccer

The women’s soccer team is the most successful athletic club at the University of Portland (UP), with multiple national championships and other awards. The team began competing in 1980 and, until the 1986 season, was part of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). In the 1986-1987 season, all women’s athletic teams at UP began competing in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I, in the West Coast Conference.

The primary factor in the rapid growth of a small Catholic university's women's soccer team into a national powerhouse has been the high caliber of the coaching staff. The most influential and longest-serving coach for the Portland Pilots women’s soccer team was Clive Charles, who coached the team from 1989 to 2003. In Charles’s final game as a collegiate coach in 2002, the Pilots won the NCAA National Championship in overtime. They won the National Championship again in 2005, becoming only the third women’s soccer team with multiple National Championships (joining North Carolina and Notre Dame).

The Pilots play in the Clive Charles Soccer Complex, established in 2004. The large complex consists of a number of high-quality facilities, including Harry A. Merlo Field and the Rev. Chester S. Prusynski, CSC, Practice Field, named in honor of the longtime UP professor and devoted fan.

The UP women's soccer team has played a significant role in the increasing popularization of soccer in the United States. Dynamic coaches and talented players have fostered a vibrant soccer-centered culture. The popular and successful summer soccer camps hosted by the UP women's soccer team have helped foster a passion for the game among young women in the Pacific Northwest.

Alumnae of the Portland Pilots include Christine Sinclair, Tiffeny Milbrett, Shannon MacMillan, Megan Rapinoe, Stephanie Cox, and Sophie Schmidt. Many of the players hold national collegiate records, have played on national teams in Canada and the United States, and have competed in the World Cup and the Olympics.

Written by Paul Senz

Further Reading:

University of Portland Women's Soccer. http://www.portlandpilots.com/index.aspx?path=wsoc.

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