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DECEMBER 8 AND 10

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Thomas Jefferson University (then known as Philadelphia Textiles) enjoyed a long run of success behind student-athletes such as Tim Killeen, who played there from 1979-82.

BY ANY OTHER NAME...

*Thomas Jefferson University enjoyed a successful
run in Division I men's soccer*

By Ian Clark

A soccer program by any other name would still be as sweet. That may not have been exactly what William Shakespeare wrote, but when it comes to the ever-evolving name of Thomas Jefferson University, the sentiment is accurate. The men's soccer program at Jefferson has a strong pedigree that includes a two-decade run between 1969 and 1989 that saw the Rams make the NCAA tournament 17 times.

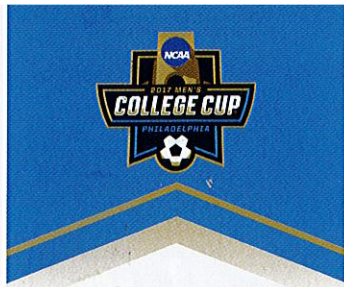
Jefferson began its life as Philadelphia Textile School in 1884. In 1941 it became Philadelphia Textile Institute before changing to Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science in 1961. From 1999 until this year (when it became Jefferson) the school was known as Philadelphia University.

The men's soccer team first began to gain some traction on the national scene in 1969 under head coach Walt Chyzowych. That year, Philadelphia Textile (the shorthand name most associated with the school) made the NCAA playoffs for the first time and defeated fellow Pennsylvania school West Chester, 2-1, in the first round before losing to Pennsylvania, 2-1, in four overtimes in the second round.

Philadelphia Textile would then make the NCAA Division I tournament in 1971 and 1974-79 (with a stop in the Division II tournament in 1972). During that run, which saw former Textile assistant coach Barry Barto take over head coaching duties in 1976, the program began to draw in strong players who racked up All-American honors and many of whom went on to play in any of the numerous professional soccer leagues of the time.

The success came through a formula of adding top international players to a steady stream of talent from the Philadelphia area, like Dave MacWilliams, who led the nation in scoring with 22 goals and captained the Rams to a College Cup appearance in his senior year of 1978.

"Textile kind of built their program by getting the top local players in the area,



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and then they mixed them with the international players like Dale Russell [a four-time All-American from Bermuda]," said MacWilliams, who recently completed his 18th season as the head men's soccer coach at Temple after playing professionally in the North American Soccer League and Major Indoor Soccer League. "They took those guys and the top American kids in the area, and that's how they had their blend, and it was very, very successful. The four years I was there we were in the top 10, and my last year we ranked second or third going into the final four and were the only undefeated team at the time."

MacWilliams, who hails from the Kensington area of Philly, said that he was considering Penn State and Temple when Philadelphia Textile came calling.

"When I was looking I wanted a school that was very competitive soccer-wise," MacWilliams said. "I think what had happened was that I had just been named player of the year and Barry Barto showed up at my classroom and got me out of my class and spoke to me. I think back then most of the players wanted to stay local. I don't think too many of the top players went out of the city."

That strong dedication to the city of Philadelphia and its soccer reputation was due in large part to the Lighthouse Boys Club soccer program in Kensington, which still exists today.

"We all played at Lighthouse Boys Club, and I called that the Mecca of soccer in Philadelphia,"

MacWilliams said. "A lot of clubs originated from people leaving Lighthouse Boys Club and moving to different areas and starting up soccer organizations. Back then, Lighthouse was one of the biggest programs in the area."

At Philadelphia Textiles, MacWilliams said there was never a sense of being an underdog despite being a smaller school compared to NCAA tournament opponents the team regularly faced.

"The landscape then was a lot different," MacWilliams said. "You had Indiana, Saint Louis, Howard, Clemson and then Hartwick, and then us. We were up there with a lot of them."

The Rams were regularly in the thick of it, and not just making the playoffs, but scoring wins over those bigger names. In 1974, Philadelphia advanced to the quarterfinals after wins over Fairleigh Dickinson and Bucknell. The next year, it made the quarters again with wins over Penn State and Fairleigh Dickinson. In 1976, it was another trip to the quarters, this time with identical 4-0 wins over Penn State and Temple.

MacWilliams said he never failed to needle Penn State head coach Walt Bahr about his success against the school that was among his potential collegiate landing spots.

"We played against Penn State a lot, and every time I used to kid Walt Bahr, because every time we played against them I would have at least one if not two [goals], and there were two games where I had

three," MacWilliams said.

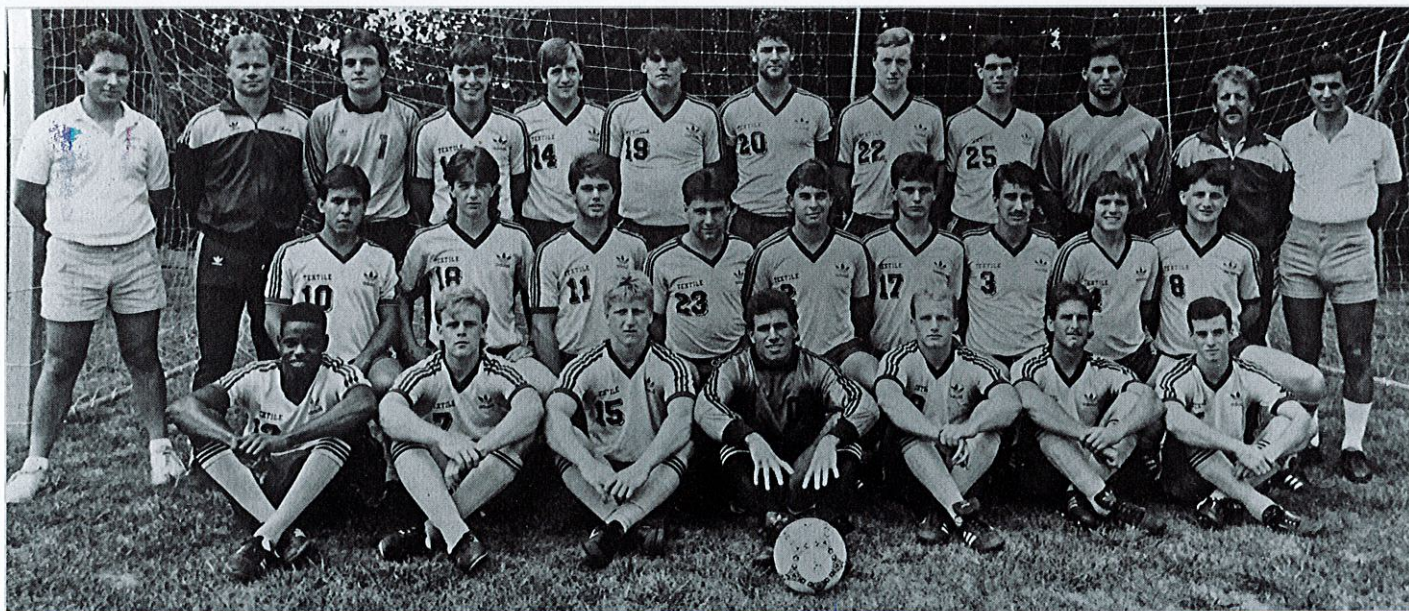
The 1977 playoffs once again saw MacWilliams and Philadelphia knock Penn State out in the second round. Making the quarterfinal round was becoming a habit for the Rams, and they did it while saddled with a significant disadvantage.

"We never really had a true field [to practice on]. We used to train on the outfield of the softball field," MacWilliams said. "We didn't have the facilities that other schools had. It was tough because that was all we had, and we were ranked 10th in the nation."

MacWilliams' senior season of 1978 saw the boys from Textile break through. The Rams beat LaSalle, 5-1, in the first round and eased past Temple, 2-1, in overtime in the second round. This time the quarterfinals would not be the season finale for Philadelphia, which beat UConn 3-0 to reach the Men's College Cup for the first time in program history.

Indiana, which would finish as the runner-up that season after losing to San Francisco, 2-0, in the finals, was able to end the Rams' run with a 2-0 win in the semifinals. The loss still carries with it a "what-if?" for MacWilliams, who was inducted into the Rams' Hall of Fame in 1985.

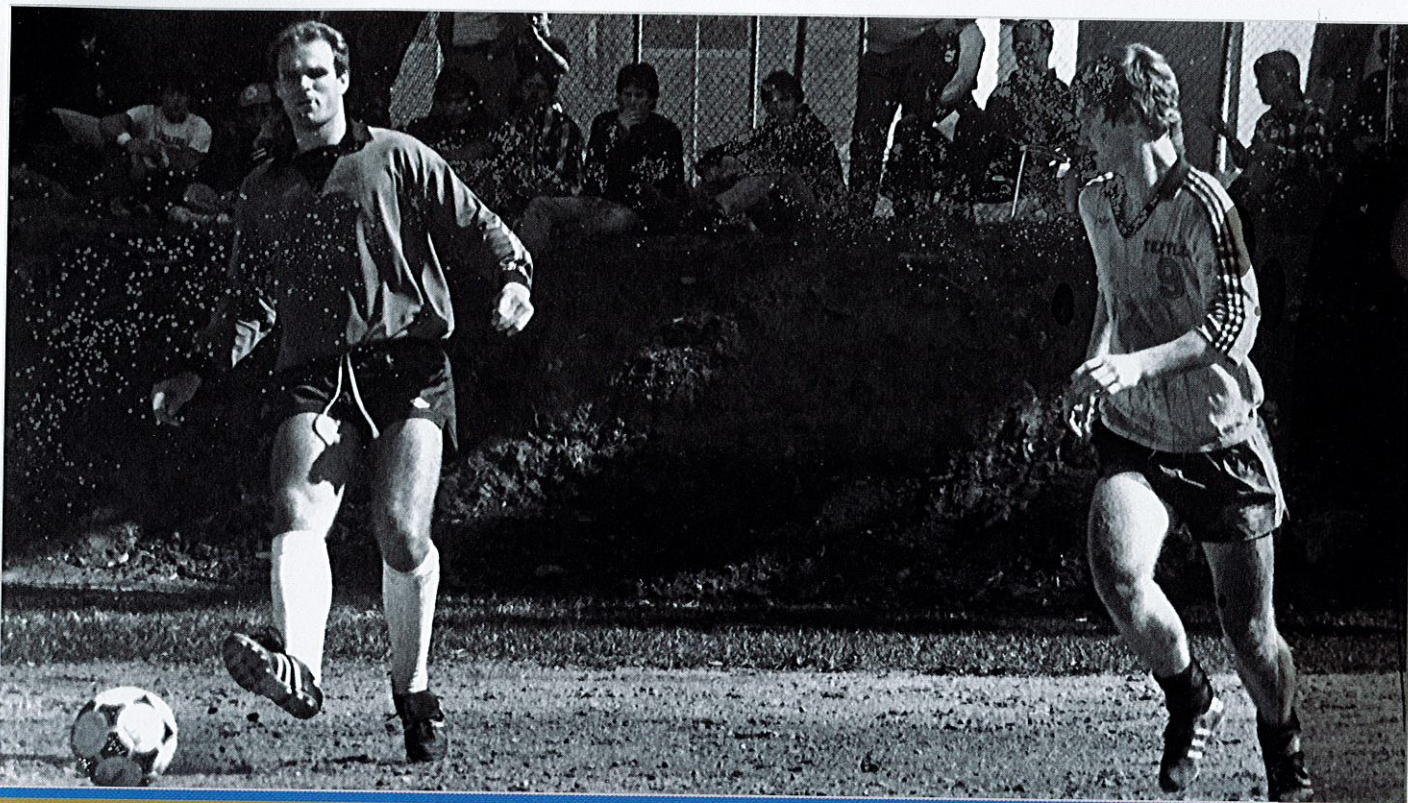
"It was a great season. Unfortunately, we had two injuries in the game against Connecticut. We had Joe Harvey, who was our starting right back, and then we had Adrian Brooks get injured. He played in the game, but we had to change formations,"



The 1987 Philadelphia Textiles squad, coached by Jacob "Lew" Meehl.



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Graeme Macrae (left) and Steve McLean (right) in a 1983 match between Philadelphia Textiles and California.

MacWilliams said. "I was always up top and Adrian was in the middle, and between us we had close to 40 goals. We had a great understanding [of each other]. In the finals he was hobbled and couldn't do as much, so they put him up top with me to change the formation, and it was tough. But we had a good run."

Following MacWilliams' departure the success remained for Philly Textile, which made the NCAA tournament from 1979 to 1984. Barto left after the 1981 season with an 85-15-6 record over six seasons, including a trip to the College Cup in 1981. Tom Smith coached the team in 1982 and 1983, posting a 28-5-6 record but falling in the first round of the NCAA tournament both years.

The next man to take the helm was Jacob "Lew" Meehl, a former first team All-American at Temple in the late 1960s. Meehl had played professionally in the American Soccer League, NASL and MISL before becoming a coach. He was an assistant at Princeton before taking the reins at Philadelphia.

Meehl said he felt the pressure to maintain the high level of play that had marked the past decade-plus of Rams soccer.

"Simply, you want to continue the successful tradition. It wasn't pressure of losing the position based on losses, but simply I would want the program to be maintained at a high level," said Meehl, who is now retired. "I did not feel like I had to impose my own stamp on the program. I had to understand the expectations of the college administration and athletics department, then better realize the abilities of the players and continue to promote a style of play based on these abilities. If such a [personal] stamp was desired it would be a quality program and one that the school would be proud of and any opponent would respect for quality of play and athletic demeanor."

Meehl would go on to lead the Rams until 1992, racking up a record of 103-52-23 and making the tournament in 1984, 1988 and 1989. One of those trips, the 1988 run, stood out to Meehl all these years later. Philadelphia had defeated Navy, 1-0, in the first round and then went up against host Howard in an epic second-round matchup.

"They were so talented, honestly more so than us. The game went 0-0 in regulation. In the second 15-minute overtime with 1:44 left, they scored,"

Meehl said. "[It was not] sudden death and we scored with 44 seconds [remaining]. We then proceeded to the ninth [penalty kick], which we missed and they scored. [It was] the goalkeeper, no less."

In 1989, Meehl's team beat Princeton in the first round of the playoffs before falling to Virginia in round two. That was the last time the Rams made the tournament and closed out a 20-year run of 16 appearances in the Division I tournament.

That stretch of success still means something at Jefferson — now a Division II school — where Prah Myers has been the head coach since 2010.

"There has been a good history of great coaches that have led this program to success. My job now is to continue to grow that tradition of success on and off the field," Myers said. "We have a great group of young men right now. I want to pave the way for the next coach who is fortunate enough to take over this distinguished program."

Ian Clark has worked as a sportswriter, entertainment columnist and radio anchor for 20 years. He lives in the capital region of New Hampshire with his wife, Amy, and sons, Kaiden and Kael.