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Delaware, Shippensburg and Messiah Claim NCAA National Championships

CHANDLER, Ariz. – The 2016 field hockey season produced three NCAA champions to remember. A pair of programs won the title for the first time in school history, while another claimed the crown to complete an emotional and trying season.

Delaware won the NCAA Division I Field Hockey Championship for the first time, with the No. 8 Blue Hens completing the run by defeating No. 4 North Carolina 3-2 in the championship contest on Sunday. Delaware defeated three Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) teams on its way to the title, and won all four of its NCAA Tournament games by one goal.

Shippensburg earned the NCAA Division II Field Hockey Championship for the second time in four years. The team completed an outstanding season with a 2-1 win over LIU Post in Sunday's title game, and won the title in a year that was dedicated to the memory of former standout player and assistant coach Amanda Strous, who died in June.

Messiah won the NCAA Division III title to complete an amazing run that saw it win each of its 22 contests against DIII opponents after suffering its only loss in the season opener against Shippensburg. After a scoreless contest against Tufts in the national championship on Sunday, the Falcons won 2-1 in penalty strokes for their first national title after coming away as the runner-up on eight previous occasions.

More on the seasons for each of the three national champions is included below.

Delaware: The historic run to their first national title was the culmination of a huge winning streak for the Blue Hens, who were victorious in their final 19 games to finish at 23-2 for the season. Delaware had regular-season wins over nationally-ranked foes Virginia, James Madison, Albany, Michigan and American, and beat JMU again in the Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) title game on Nov. 6 to claim the crown after an unbeaten regular-season in conference action. The Blue Hens went into the NCAA

Tournament at No. 8 in the Penn Monto/NFHCA Coaches Poll, and pulled out a 1-0 win over No. 9 Louisville in the first round on Nov. 12. The next day, Delaware won perhaps the most dramatic game of the tournament by scoring twice in the final 10 minutes to even the score and then getting the game-winner from Greta Nauck in the 73rd minute for a 3-2 overtime victory at top-seeded Duke to advance to the national semifinals. The Blue Hens scored late to win 3-2 contests in both the semifinals and championship as well, beating Princeton in the former when Esmee Peet tallied in the 69th minute and North Carolina in the latter as Nauck scored in the 65th minute for the win.

Shippensburg: A team that sought to “Leave a Legacy” and unite under the mantra of “Live, Laugh, Love” in honor of Strous certainly did so all season. Shippensburg finished the year with a 20-3 record, and avenged each of its losses in the postseason. The No. 1-ranked Raiders fell to No. 3 East Stroudsburg twice during the regular season, but defeated ESU 2-1 on the road in the NCAA quarterfinals on Nov. 12 to advance to the Final Four. There Shippensburg faced No. 2 Millersville in the semifinals after the teams split a pair of regular-season contests, with Emily Barnard scoring the lone goal of the matchup in the 65th minute. Shippensburg won its second national title, and first since 2013, with a 2-1 win over No. 4 LIU Post in the championship on Sunday. It was the same matchup and score as the 2013 championship victory for the Raiders.

Messiah: The Falcons stood out as the top team in Division III all season, going a perfect 22-0 against opponents at their level and holding the No. 1 ranking in the Penn Monto/NFHCA Division III Coaches Poll for the final seven weeks of the season. The unblemished record against DIII foes came against a daunting regular-season schedule that included top-10 victories over Ursinus, Salisbury, Franklin & Marshall and The College of New Jersey and additional top-20 wins against Alvernia and William Smith. The Falcons moved on to the Final Four by winning a pair of home games in the second and third rounds of the NCAA Tournament, beating Keene State 5-0 on Nov. 12 and then taking out No. 4 Middlebury, the defending national champion, by a 4-2 final the next day. Messiah continued to roll by defeating No. 7 Babson 5-2 in the semifinals on Saturday. In Sunday’s championship game, the Falcons played to a scoreless draw through two overtimes in adverse winter weather conditions against No. 3 Tufts. The contest moved to strokes where Carissa Gehman and Shayna Landis scored the Falcons on the way to a 2-1 decision. Messiah won its first national title in its ninth trip to the championship game and 15th appearance in the Final Four.