

# Principles and Discipline

If one wants to make an impact, it starts with only one individual if you ask senior defender Rochelle Jagdeo.

The two-time Western Athletic Conference Preseason Defensive Player of the Year is the quarterback of the last line of defense when it comes to Fresno State soccer. In her fourth season with the Bulldogs, her job isn't glamorous. If you asked her to define her role, she'd tell you that it's all intrinsic.

"A defensive player is someone who goes out there and never, ever, gives up," says the two-time All-WAC center back that was part of a defensive line that allowed just five goals in league action last season. "You have to be tough as nails, know what is going on with the game, have vision on the field, distribute balls and just plain communicate.

"Winning the one-on-one battles really gets me going," says Jagdeo, who helped direct the program to its first WAC tournament title and second NCAA Tournament bid in 2005. "When someone is dribbling at you and there's nothing behind you but the goalie and the net there is that rush when you take the ball away. You won the battle."

As the reigning WAC Defensive Player of the Year, this 5-6 native out of Vacaville, Calif., has bigger dreams in store for Bulldogs.

"We graduated three seniors and they showed us how to persevere and win," says the 2005 WAC All-Tournament selection. "This year, the senior class is viewing our defense of the league championship as a privilege because we earned it. Of course there is pressure but we'll take the pressure and use it in a constructive manner. The realization of what we accomplished is going to drive us to want more."

What was it that turned the corner for the Bulldogs? In mid-October, Fresno State reeled off a 4-1-1 mark, including a 1-0 road victory before 3,100 fans against regular-season WAC champion Hawai'i. Entering the league tournament as the No. 5 seed, the 'Dogs went on to win three straight matches to garner the program's first NCAA automatic bid.

**While helping the Bulldogs soccer program reach heights, outside the lines Rochelle Jagdeo has always been tackling what is needed to pursue life outside of athletics.**

"It was a combination of things that helped us turn the corner," says Jagdeo, who was recruited by Bulldogs after being seen in a summer tournament in Fresno. "We were tired of putting in so much effort at practice and not getting the results. Once we got on the same page we just took off. I'll never forget that day we won the WAC title but I want something else. I think we can do more. I want to see what we can do in the NCAA Tournament. I want to make an impression there and for people to take notice of this program."

The success that Fresno State experienced last year starts with the fortitude of its players. Jagdeo confidently equips her success in the classroom with that on the field, especially when it comes to laying down the initial groundwork.

"Academics and athletics definitely go hand-in-hand when it comes to preparation and discipline," says Jagdeo, who also has spent the off season working as the co-head soccer coach for the Clovis High freshman team. "If you go to school, get your work done then you can go play. Like sports, you do the work, run drills and then play. It's all about principles and discipline.

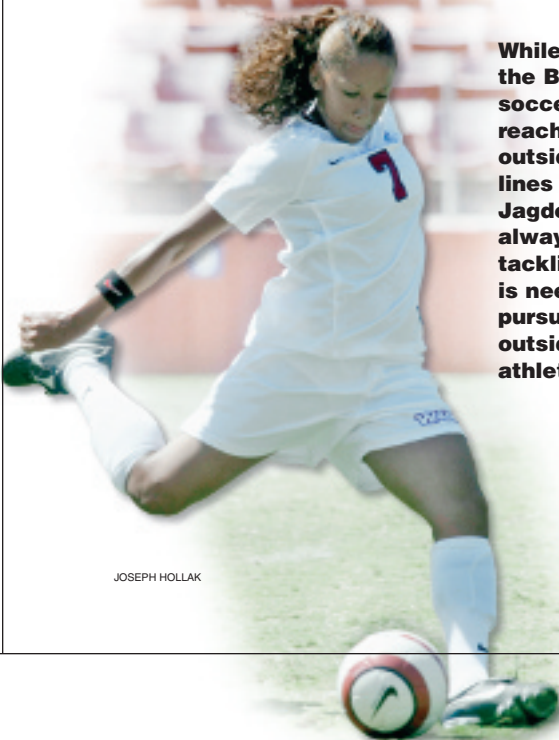
"For someone starting out, I would say to get your schoolwork done, take your college entrance exams and get your grades taken care of because you don't want anything held up," Jagdeo states. "At the time you don't think it correlates but it does. On the athletic side, get yourself out there. Find a club team that makes you happy and can take you places to be seen. Also, take the initiative of contacting coaches and finding out as much you can about the school and program."

A three-time WAC All-Academic and Fresno State Scholar-Athlete, she sports a 3.75 cumulative GPA in exercise science that saw her garner 2005 ESPN The Magazine Academic All-District VIII honors. Also a two-time WAC Scholar-Athlete and a Dean's List member, Jagdeo has aspirations of going to medical school.

"You can't do anything without something affecting the outcome of something else," Jagdeo says. "The more important thing to me is academics but athletics is really an incredible complement. For anyone in whatever is chosen, find out what you are good at and learn to enjoy it. Find your own success that you can celebrate on your own. Feel good about yourself and be able to pick your head up when things go bad. You have to find that in yourself. Ultimately, work hard, persevere, support one another and do what it takes to get the job done."

Bulldog head coach Steve Springthorpe has seen the maturation process in Jagdeo. While his squad is the 2006 WAC preseason favorite, he has tabbed "Ro" his team captain who will guide the ship into uncharted territories.

"Over the last one and a half years Ro has elevated her leadership qualities," says Springthorpe, who enters his third season with the Bulldogs. "Where we are now is in uncharted waters. Sitting atop the WAC, winning it and then now being the preseason favorite requires a whole different mindset. It is a privilege to be where we are and we need someone like Ro to get everyone on the same page. She has anchored our defense and she uses the tools she has so well. She's smart, reads the game and puts herself in a good position to make the right decisions. That only comes from her work ethic, being a good student and accomplishing her goals by learning."



JOSEPH HOLLAK