

Raiders foresee successful season with returnees

BY DAN O'NEARA
STAFF WRITER
domeara@oe.com

With the majority of his North Farmington team returning, coach Tim Russell is confident the Raiders are going to have a good year in girls soccer.

The Raiders bring back nine seniors following an 8-11-2 season, and that's the most on any North team coached by Russell, who begins his eighth season.

"We're going to do very well," he said. "I'm sure we'll be at

least as good as last year. Barring injuries, it's probably the best team we've had in the last eight years.

"It's going to come down to taking the games we know we should win, and we're going to pick up a few we haven't in the past. Some teams that have gotten used to beating us will be surprised."

The Raiders, who have experienced players at every position, boast the one-two forward combination of seniors Nicole Adena

GIRLS SOCCER

and Lauren Hogan. Both are four-year starters.

Adena, who had three goals and three assists, is more the playmaker who creates scoring opportunities for her teammates.

"We get the ball to her, and she plays the target," Russell said. "She receives it, delivers it. She causes a lot of defenders to come to her, and she dumps it off

for other people."

Hogan, who is also a tri-captain, was the leading scorer with 11 goals and six assists despite missing almost half the season with an injury.

"Nicole is great for setting it up and Lauren for putting it away," Russell said. "When we lost her last year, we had been depending on her way too much."

"This year we have a lot stronger support for her than we had. When we lost her, it hurt our offense, whereas this year we're a lot more balanced."

The Raiders also return senior Sara Jakab, a third-year varsity player who is probably the most improved player on the team, according to Russell, at forward along with junior Chris Gabriel, who was on the JV.

In the midfield, North is led by senior tri-captain and four-year starter Meghan Callahan, who also excels in basketball and volleyball.

"She's the field general," Russell said. "She has excellent ball control. She's very intelligent as far as seeing the field and great at delivering the ball."

Senior Lauren McKinney and sophomore Catherine Munaco also return to the midfield.

McKinney was now to the team after moving into the district last year but is more experienced and ready to assume a front-line role.

Munaco communicates well and complements the captains in terms of leadership. "She's a strong player, physically and mentally, and has a terrific spirit," Russell said.

The fourth starter in the midfield is freshman Christine Taylor, who has a solid all-around game. "I can't think of anything she doesn't do well," Russell said.

The other midfielders are senior Kathleen Bendick, sophomore Meg Callahan (no relation to Meghan), sophomore Kristin Hogan (sister of Lauren) and sophomore Amanda O'Steen.

The Raiders will have a solid defense with all four starters returning. Seniors Nurit Golenberg and Jenna Street (tri-cap-



FILE PHOTO BY BILL BREKLER

Veteran player: Julie Goettlicher (left) is just a bit late on an attempted header in a game last year. She's a four-year starter for the Falcons.

tain) are wing defenders.

"Nurit played a solid, consistent role for us since her sophomore year," Russell said. "She has always been very steady."

"Jenna is a solid, all-around player. I'm especially happy for her, because she's coming into the season healthy and ready to go."

The other defenders are no less experienced. Juniors Michele Boothroyd (sweeper) and Ashley Lynch (stopper) are three-year starters.

"Michele is a fast player, extremely smooth and deceptively tough," Russell said. "Ashley is a very hard tackler. She has great all-around skills, and she never gives up."

Providing backup on defense

will be senior Melissa Navas and junior Brianna Loveland.

The goalie will be freshman Bridgette Bears, who just might be the best natural athlete on the team, according to Russell.

"We're real lucky we have her," he said. "I wouldn't be surprised if she's not all-conference once or twice before she graduates. She's extremely solid and she has a great attitude."

The Raiders are scheduled to begin the season Monday night at home against West Bloomfield.

"It should be an outstanding year," Russell said. "The girls who are leaders on this team have no doubts. They're dedicated and focused on doing well this year."

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good athlete she was," he said. "We talked about her being a goalie, and she had a great year."

So why would Montgomery move her to a field position if Farmington was set at that position?

The team's "secret weapon" is freshman goalie Kate Kelly, and ODP player and one heckuva keeper, according to Montgomery.

"There isn't a weak part of Katie's game," he said. "I've been totally impressed with her play. She's knowledgeable and very

schooled in goalkeeping."

Playing support roles in the midfield are senior Alex Nickless and sophomores Maria Lockhart and Mallory McGee.

The Falcons, who outplayed Grosse Pointe North but lost in a regional game last year, open the season Wednesday at Trenton.

"The team is close-knit and the girls get along well, and that's one thing you need to be successful," Montgomery said. "If we keep that up through the whole season, we can go farther than we went last year."

"If we can get a couple breaks, we could possibly go to the (state) final. With a goalie like Kate Kelly, in close games, she can make a difference. I'm usually pretty conservative, so I wouldn't say that unless I really thought we could."

"I'm pretty excited about the team. The girls are excited and we're expecting a good season. Again, we're in a tough conference and it will be a battle in there, but I think we'll be competitive."

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