

# Mercy soccer team boasts solid nucleus

BY DAN O'MEARA  
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Coach Tania Macioce has 10 varsity veterans around which to build a foundation for the Farmington Hills Mercy girls soccer team this year.

The Marlins were 5-7-3 last season and will start the new campaign Tuesday, April 9, at home against Pontiac Notre Dame Prep.

"I'm looking forward to the season," said Macioce, a former Mercy star who played collegiately at Notre Dame. "Everyone is coming in with a positive attitude, and there seems to be more excitement."

"In the league, our goal is always to get to the Catholic

## GIRLS SOCCER

League final. We have a tough schedule, but we're hoping to be up there."

One of the top returning players is senior midfielder Angie Trudeau, a second-team, All-Observer selection and one of Mercy's leading scorers last year.

"We're definitely looking to her to be a team leader," Macioce said. "I'm sure she'll be another strong presence on the field this year."

Other returning seniors are outside midfielder Melissa Hoger and defenders Lindsey Birchmeier, Kristen Whalen, Sarah Broniak and Emily Mey.

Hoger will probably move up to the front of the attack and fill the role of a forward to take advantage of her shot-making ability, Macioce said.

The Marlins hope to involve Birchmeier in the midfield action, too. Whalen will probably be the stopper and Moy the sweeper, and Broniak will have a lot more playing time this year.

Juniors Lauren Longley and Ellen Cappel return to the midfield, and both are skilled players who read the field and distribute the ball well, according to Macioce.

Sophomore Caitlin Risk is a returning starter and one of the team's most versatile players, and Macioce is trying to deter-

mine where best to play her. Sophomore Monisha Berkowski was the starting goalkeeper last year, had a great season and looks ready to continue that, Macioce said.

Mercy appears to have an over-abundance of defenders based on position assignments, but Macioce plans to move players around.

"When you look at it, it seems that way, but we do have some versatile players," she said. "Some players in the midfield can rotate through to forward, and some defenders possess skills to play midfield as well."

"We're a pretty versatile team. We do have a lot of players who can play in different spots."

Though the Marlins don't have

a player who scored a lot of goals, Macioce isn't concerned about the outlook, offensively.

"At this point, I don't see that being a problem," she said. "We have some kids with very good finishing skills. Even though we have a lot of defenders, hopefully, they'll be distributing the ball up front."

As far as newcomers, sophomore Katie Fuller, who was moved up to varsity at the end of last season, has offensive potential and will play a forward.

Sophomore defender Julie Ryder also was on the varsity for a time when the Marlins had some injuries and will have a bigger role this year.

Andrea Whalen is another sophomore defender who played

on the JV last year. Senior Megan Garagiola is another first-year varsity player who will be the backup goalie.

Completing the varsity roster are sophomore Becca Higa, who is new to the program, and freshmen Jessica Greeney and Sarah Rudowski. Greeney will likely start in the midfield; Higa is a forward and Rudowski a defender.

Sophomore Kristen Gorski also is a member of the team, but she will have surgery to repair a torn ACL and probably won't play this year.

Macioce also has new coaches in varsity assistant Derek Peters and JV coach Koko Oku, a former Nigerian national player, according to Macioce.

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more midfielder Vean Vungi.

"It's too early in the season to tell how they're going to do," Lange-Punzal said. "I haven't known them long enough and, with the cold temperatures, we're having a lot of indoor practices."

"(The returning players) are hard working and very eager to learn. They really are a good group of girls. Hopefully, the more they get to know each other, the better they'll work together as a team."

The new varsity players are junior Janelle Lalonde, who was on the JV last year, and fresh-

men Rachel Morrison, Stacey Potrykus, Leanne Burns, Ashley Nelson, Sarah Abou-El-Seoud, Nicki Kurylo and Stephanie Klosek.

Some of the younger girls, who are talented and have a lot of speed, according to Lange-Punzal, will be starters, but she has yet to settle on a starting lineup.

"We have a couple injuries that will affect how we line up for the West Bloomfield game (Monday, April 8)," Lange-Punzal said. "It's hard when you've only known the girls for two weeks."

"I have an idea right now, but

we need a little more work. The girls are out there in the cold every day. They're running, working hard and fighting for starting spots."

The Hawks, who had a March 25 game with Milford postponed, will open on the road at West Bloomfield and are at Northville to start Western Lakes game Wednesday, April 10.

"I'm optimistic we can be competitive," Lange-Punzal said. "We should be able to improve from game to game and be competitive in the years to come."

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competition will play out," Soror said. "I feel the girls more than fulfilled their potential this year. They really did make the most of their ability and really came through."

The Mercy skaters are senior Katie Schmenk, juniors Kayla Bridges, Nicole Hicks, Marie Pacini, Andrea Roman, Jessica Start, Nicole Zaleski, sophomore Ashley Pons and freshmen Jessica Courtland, Erin Gerlich and Allison Mooney.

"Our goal, when the season started, was to make the state championships in both high and low, so we really surpassed our expectations," Soror said.

"Our practices were at 6 a.m. That's not the best of conditions,

but the girls made those times productive and got the job done. "It's a little tough in the winter to get there at 6 in the morning. They made the commitment and made it work for themselves."

Mercy, which was second to Divine Child in the district meet, placed second in jumps and moves at the state championships and won the spins competition, thereby securing the overall team title.

The moves and jumps events had different team winners, so Mercy's first place in spins gave it the points necessary to overtake the other contenders.

Mooney was the team's lone qualifier for the individual competition, and she finished fourth

in the intermediate ladies category. Soror has taught figure skating on an individual basis for many years, the last 15 at the Detroit Skating Club, but this year was the first time she was involved in skating as a team sport.

"Girls who start skating are usually exempt from competing in other (school) sports," she said. "It's great that these schools have skating, so these girls have an opportunity to compete for their school in something they've spent maybe 10 years working on."

"It does give them a little more connection to their school. Mercy is fortunate to have an athletic director (Nancy Malinowski) who supports skating."

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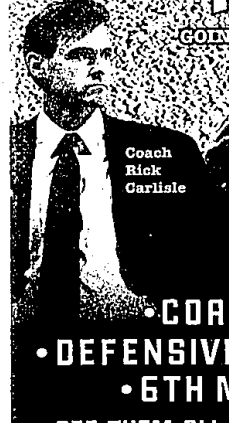
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