

JUNIATA MENNONITE GIRLS SOCCER

ACAA tournament is the goal for these lady Lions

By **KENNY VARNER**

Sentinel correspondent

McALISTERVILLE — Juniata Mennonite coach Trish Hoffman has one simple goal for her girls soccer team in 2012.

That goal is to “do the best they can and hopefully make the Allegheny Christian Athletic Association postseason,” she said.

Despite just two players lost to graduation from a year ago, a group of underclassmen will lead the way for the Lions as they try to improve from a record that was just short of making the postseason last year.

To help her achieve this task, Hoffman gains an assistant, Hope Watts, on the sidelines this season.

Along with the small grad-

AT A GLANCE

JUNIATA MENNONITE SCHOOL LIONS

Allegheny Christian Athletic Association

Coach: Trish Hoffman, assisted by Hope Watts

uating class, the Lions will see smaller numbers after the school decided it will no longer accept home-schooled players.

One of the key players that Hoffman will be calling upon will be her lone senior, Rachel Allen. After that, Hoffman will look mainly to her young players to step up and shine.

“I have some underclassmen that are going to be some key returnees for me, even

though they are going to be going into 10th grade. They are Valerie Wagner and Alexis Hahn-Kline,” Hoffman said.

Hoffman said the team had an impressive beginning two weeks of practice.

“I think we looked well so far this year. We have some holes to fill because of losing our seniors from last year,” Hoffman said. “But overall, we have some younger kids playing well and stepping up for us.”

Some of the team’s strengths that the Lions will sport this season will come from the defensive end.

“We have a strong defense and that should help us out,” Hoffman said. “We also have some players coming that will do well for us on the front line. Right now we are working on our midfielders.

“We lost a lot of our midfielders from last year. So that’s trying to figure out where to put people right now.”

Hoffman has hopes of a postseason bid for her team this season in a tough ACAA eastern division.

“I am hoping we can make it to the playoffs. We will have to come in first, second or third and we always come close to that third place,” Hoffman said. “But obviously we would like to go higher. I think that if we can win some of the games that are close for us and sometimes that can go either way, we have to come out strong against those games and I think we can make it into the playoffs.”

Some of the teams Hoffman see as strong adversaries this season are Northumberland Christian and Meadow-

brook Christian.

The goals for the team during the season will be coming from the players’ own game face.

“One of the goals I am really stressing this year is commitment,” Hoffman said. “Some of the girls come out and don’t take it as seriously as a public school but I have

seen great commitment this week. Just by pushing them we strengthened some of our fitness over.

“One our goals is the playoffs but one of my goals is to get them more in shape because we are, in our division, one of the smaller schools. I need them to play a whole game for us.”

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Members of the Juniata Mennonite Schools girls soccer team are, from left, front, Madison Rheam, Alaina Shambach, Lydia Rudy, Amy Esterline and Chloe Campbell; middle, Bethany Saner, Alexis Hahn-Kline, Monica Brubaker and Lauren Breon; back, Ciara Shay, Valarie Meiser, Kiersten Baumgardner, Rachel Allen, Alaina Brown and coach Trish Hoffman. Blaze Kelley is also a member.