

JUNIATA BOYS SOCCER

Juniata boys try to mend after losing 11 players

By **NICK WAGNER**

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MIFFLINTOWN — Losing any amount of seniors from one year to the next can present a daunting task to any scholastic program.

But for Clint Brackbill and the Juniata Indians, the program is reaching uncharted territory with the loss of 11 seniors — nine of them starters — from last year's District 6 Class AA quarterfinal team.

Of those nine starters, the Indians lost their keeper, four players in the back and two up top.

They'll also be switching back from the Mountain League to the Tri-Valley League.

"Everyone sees that and says they're going to be young and it's going to be a rebuilding year," Brackbill said. "I kind of hate that."

Juniata returns five players that have had varsity experience in the past. And yes, they are young. However, that doesn't mean they won't put up a strong fight back in the TVL.

"We're going to be young and lack experience, but I think with what the seniors did the last couple years was create a work ethic," the coach said. "I think that hopefully it's in these guys."

The seniors that will be missed for Juniata in the 2012 season led the Indians to an 11-6 mark a year ago. Brackbill said they should have done a little bit more last year but it was a good season overall.

Missing from this year's squad in the middle is Colt Brackbill. He was named last season's Mountain League Nittany Division MVP. Ross Cook, a first-team all-star



Sentinel photo by BUFFIE BOYER

Members of the Juniata boys soccer team are, from left, front, Tanner Zimmerman, Brennan Paden, Logan Aurand, Brandon Becker, Kyle Kint, Matt Coldren, Dean Lenker, Dusty Haldeman, Taylor Foster, Wyatt Brackbill and Luis Pacheco; middle, coach Clint Brackbill, Jimmy Hemond, Andrew Clouser, Brad Lipka, Nick Righter, Ricky Heck, Jon Ruiz, Chantz Imes, Nick Gilbert, William Manbeck, Donovan Righter and Garrick Paden; back, John Breon, Brad Strawser, Caleb Foster, Brand Brackbill, Jose Lopez, Cole Walters, Eric Crimmel, Jeff Galeas and Adam Lehman.

AT A GLANCE

JUNIATA INDIANS

District 6, Class AA

Coach: Clint Brackbill

2011: 11-6

from 2011, and Luke Storey are gone up top. That trio of players, along with outside backers Eric Haubert and Jared Fulkroad, accounted for a lot of goals.

But possibly the biggest loss for the Indians will be the departure of keeper Garrick Paden. Paden notched seven shutouts last year with little experience in the net. Paden gained the confidence of his teammates and was able to put together a fine season.

"That's probably going to be our toughest adjustment,"

Clint Brackbill said. "That's a spot where we have the least amount of clue. It's not just like we can throw a guy in there. You have to have a guy that knows what he's doing."

The most experience the Indians will have back is junior forward Jose Lopez. As a sophomore starter, Lopez developed into a key player on the Indians' attack.

"He's a strong player and we're going to ask a lot from him," Brackbill said. "Hopefully we don't ask too much from him so he can handle it."

After gaining a lot of experience a year ago, sophomore Brennen Paden returns, along with Wyatt Brackbill and Chantz Imes, a pair of juniors. But a wild card for this group may be the play of junior Nick Gilbert.

Gilbert's season was

scarred by a broken nose. After starting the season and playing well, the then-sophomore got a little hesitant, having to wear a mask.

"Will we be as strong as we were last year? No," Clint Brackbill said. "I think once we get some confidence and the guys work together we should be fine."

With the season being marked by youth for the Indians, Brackbill thinks that may also be one of his team's strengths. When practices started, all 11 spots were up for grabs, and Brackbill made his team aware of that.

After just over a week of practice was in the books, the competition level was high and that may lead to fierce battles for each and every position.

Playing behind so many

seniors last season, the younger kids were hesitant to go out and play their game. You could tell there was a little pressure on them to succeed," Brackbill said. But this is now their year, and Brackbill is enjoying the competition.

"You need competition," he said. "You can't let guys get stagnant."

After a pair of seasons in the Mountain League, Juniata returns to the Tri-Valley League with the likes of East Juniata, Greenwood, Upper Dauphin and Halifax to name a few. Juniata expects some stiff competition.

Brackbill said East Juniata is the team to contend with this year, along with Greenwood.



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