

## MIDD-WEST BOYS SOCCER

# Team looks to prove itself after disappointing year

By **ZACH KNEPP**

*Sentinel correspondent*

MIDDLEBURG — The Mid-West boys soccer team and coach Chris Sauer come into the season with many questions to answer about the state of the program.

Last season was the first time in the school's brief history that the Mustangs did not make the playoffs, much less contend for a conference and district title.

In fact, it was the first time that a team playing its home games in Middleburg missed the postseason since the modern playoff qualification process began.

"It killed us last year not to make the playoffs," Sauer said. "I think the only thing we were missing was confidence."

Sauer believes last year's season was the exception, not the rule. However, proving that will fall upon the shoulders of his players.

"This team really feels like it needs to prove itself," he said. "The coaching staff has challenged the players to play each game like it is the most important of the season."

Despite finishing with a 7-9-2 record, the eighth-year coach saw some things he liked down the stretch during the 2011 campaign.

"We were playing our best soccer at the end of the year," Sauer explained. "We ended the season playing well, but it was just too late. I think there were a lot of teams who were happy we didn't get in the playoffs and have to play us."

The Mustangs are hoping they can use that momentum to get off a good start this season and pick up another Heartland Athletic Conference Division 1 title. Sauer



Sentinel photo by BRADLEY KREITZER

Members of the Mid-West boys soccer team are, from left, front; Patrick Jordan, Andrew Sassaman, Tanner Ebright, Ty Ross, Chris Sheaffer, Tyler Arbogast, Jake Keister, Quinton Davis, Sabastian Callender and Austin Good; back, Malik Bethea, Asher Marks, Devaughn Johns, Trevor Stuck, Landry Harmon, Austin Hockenbrock, Colton Keister, Josh Fike, Elijah Fisher, Levi Cross, Conner Inch, Logan Klinepeter and Eric Lidington.

## AT A GLANCE

### MIDD-WEST MUSTANGS

District 4, Class AA

Coach: Chris Sauer, assisted by Mark Ferster, Matt Sankey and John Gibboney  
2011: 7-9-2, 4-8-3 Heartland Conference

believes he has the team to do it, but they will have to top two familiar foes.

"I think we will be extremely competitive in our conference this year," Sauer said. "I think Lewisburg and Selinsgrove are the best two teams on paper, but I like our chances against anyone."

While another HAC banner in the gym would be a great accomplishment, Sauer and his Mid-West squad have the same goal each season — to win a District 4 championship.

In route to the desired dis-

trict crown, the Mustangs have a bigger picture in mind.

"We want to contribute to the great tradition of Mid-West soccer. I think if we focus on doing the right things at the right time for the right reason, good things will happen for us," Sauer said.

Despite last year's sub-.500 season, Sauer will not change his team's preferred style of play. Instead, he hopes last year's learning curve by his young team will show dividends on the scoreboard.

"We still want to play an attacking style of soccer with a high work rate," he said. "As long as everyone buys into the idea of working for each other, I think we can attain our goal."

In order for the attacking style to work, a few players will have to step up and lead the Mustangs' offense. When it comes to goal scor-

ers, Sauer is hoping that senior Jake Keister can provide a much needed consistency in front of the goal. Keister netted only three goals last year, but was still named as a second-team conference all-star forward.

Juniors Ty Ross and Tyler Arbogast, along with sophomore Tanner Ebright, also could develop into Mid-West's go-to goal scorers.

Like any good goal scorer, the potential star attackers for the Mustangs will need a good set-up man in the midfield. Sauer is confident that Austin Good will be that player on this team.

"We will be as dangerous as Austin will make us. He needs to be a dynamic, creative playmaker. I truly believe he can do that," Sauer said.

Last season Good racked up 11 assists while earning a second team all-conference nod.

On the defensive end of

the field, Trevor Stuck should stabilize the team in his junior season. He will have big cleats to fill upon graduation of first team defender Tyler Wilson.

So far, Sauer likes what he sees from his players.

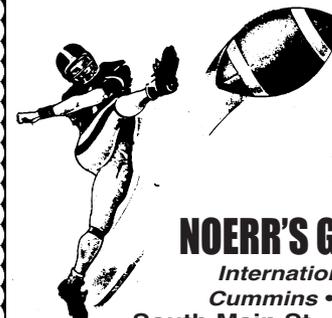
"The preseason has been pretty productive so far," he

said. "The guys have been working extremely hard. I'm happy with the effort and attitude. However, there is always room for improvement."

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