

MIFFLIN COUNTY FIELD HOCKEY

Huskies look to build on inaugural year's success

By **NICK WAGNER**

Sentinel sports reporter

nwagner@lewistownsentinel.com

LEWISTOWN — Last year's Mifflin County Huskies field hockey team did something no other team from the school accomplished in its short existence. Led by coach Tish Maclay and Tri-Valley League MVP Tayler Kuhns, the Huskies earned the District 6 Class AAA title — the first district crown in school history.

But that was last year, and things may be a little tougher for the defending district champs heading into the 2012 season. Not only will the Huskies be dealing with the loss of several seniors, they will also be heading to the always-tough Mid-Penn Conference.

Maclay still has her players working hard, but Kuhns, who now plays at Lock Haven University, along with nine other seniors, graduated.

To go along with Kuhns' departure, the Huskies also lost Tri-Valley League first-team all-star Jenn Lake.

"We lost some key players from last year," Maclay said. "Those players added a lot of strength and versatility to the team. Certainly Tayler Kuhns will be a big loss. We lost nine seniors which is a pretty significant amount."

But just because the Huskies lost a number of key players doesn't mean they should pack it in just yet. Believe it or not, they also have some serious scoring capability returning.

Sam Peters, who led the Huskies in goals in 2011 and was a TVL first-team all-star, returns for her senior season in purple. Also

AT A GLANCE

MIFFLIN COUNTY HUSKIES

District 6, Class AAA

Coach: Tish Maclay, assisted by Ashley Suydam, Courtney Kanagy and Julie Henry
2011: 15-4

giving Mifflin County some forward pressure is sophomore Kezia Loht. Loht broke the freshman scoring record a year ago and is ready to take off.

Defensively for the Huskies, things are looking bright. The entire back line returns for Mifflin County. Sabrina Boring and Whitney Strohecker lead a strong group of players in front of returning keeper Jordan Myers.

"We have a really strong group of kids coming back," Maclay said. "They're all have some valuable playing time."

Mifflin County proves to be a well-balance squad for its inaugural season in the Commonwealth Division. Scoring will be there on the offensive side of the field and the defense hasn't lost a step.

"I think we should be a well-balanced team," Maclay said. "They are all great players and they play great together. It goes back to the idea of a strong team concept."

And that team concept is something that Maclay said was lacking a year ago. But this team is focused on all 11 players on the field, not themselves.

Heading into the Mid-Penn brings several challenges for Mifflin County. The Huskies practice on grass. And in the past most of their games have been on



Sentinel photo by BUFFIE BOYER

Members of the Mifflin County field hockey team are, from left, front, Sam Peters, Sierra Smith, Sabrina Boring, Whitney Strohecker, Macie Lucas and Mary Havice; middle, Jordan Myers, Nikita Edmiston, Maddie Rutherford, Renee Grill, Elisabeth Eddy and Maria Fowler; back, Katey Cramer, Grace Wagner, Allee Sheetz, Hannah Kerstetter, Kezia Loht and Sara Neff.

grass. But things do change. Many schools in the Mid-Penn play on artificial turf, something Maclay thinks won't be a difficult adjustment with the amount of speed the Huskies have.

"Speed is one of our greatest assets," she said. "We have a lot of girls that are fast and can play. Even though we don't have many games on turf or don't practice on turf, we have a lot of kids that play a lot of indoor."

Turf or no turf, Maclay said the whole of the Mid-Penn is one of the best field hockey conferences in the

state. Last year, the Huskies lost to a Mid-Penn team (Central Dauphin) in the first round of the state tournament — although not without surprising a lot of people by staying in the game to the end. Central Dauphin made it to the state final four last season after getting by Mifflin County.

And with State College making the transition to the same league, the Huskies do have some knowledge of it, and one of their division opponents — the Little Lions are also departing the TVL

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