

GREENWOOD FIELD HOCKEY

Greenwood looks forward, not back, in new TVL

By **GREG WILLIAMS***Sentinel correspondent*

MILLERSTOWN — Four straight. Thirteen crowns overall. The Greenwood Wildcats have ruled the Tri-Valley League field hockey world for more than a decade.

But please, don't embarrass yourself. Don't even think about invoking the dreaded "D-words" around longtime head coach Kent Houser.

Last season is now a distant memory — no matter how much the Wildcats "dominated," they are not a "dynasty."

Forget about all of those TVL titles in the school's trophy. It doesn't matter that the Wildcats outscored league opponents 49-5. That hardware and those statistics won't help them win any games in 2012.

"Our focus is on how hard we work and how we play," Houser said. "We hope to have a successful season. We have to play well every night out to get a chance to win."

Pardon me for being a stickler for details. But as someone who makes his living playing with words, I don't blame Houser for not wanting to give his opponents material for their bulletin boards, or having his players become complacent.

After all, the Wildcats not winning a TVL crown would be like the Dream Team or Michael Phelps not striking gold at the Olympics. Houser will remind you that Greenwood did lose six starters — including TVL all-stars A.J. Seigel, Rachael Loy, Salene Shaffer and Samantha Boring — to graduation.

With five starters back, including top scorer Brittany Fleisher and standout goalkeeper Katie Osborne, Greenwood seems destined to make



Sentinel photo by MATT STRICKER

Members of the Greenwood field hockey team are, from left, front, Raina Sweger, Hattie Kuhns, Jordan Burkepille, Olivia Kuhns, Kelsey Keener, Katherine Barton and Rebecca Stalvey; middle, Mallory Fortenbaugh, Lauren Fried, Taylor Tompkins, Kathryn Osborne, Rachel Stroup, Lauren Wilson and Emily Fisher; back, Michaeli Wise, Stephanie Byers, Brittany Fleisher, Sierra Stephens, Mackenzie Wirth and Justice Winters.

AT A GLANCE**GREENWOOD WILDCATS**

District 3, Class AA

Coach: Kent Houser, assisted by Carrie Guarante and Kate Gant
2011: 17-2-2, 11-0-1 Tri-Valley League

another title run. Fleisher earned second-team TVL all-star honors at forward last season, racking up eight goals and five assists.

"She's a fast, physically strong player," Houser said of his senior, a four-year starter who already has topped the 100-point plateau for her decorated career.

Osborne, a first-team TVL keeper, only allowed five goals in league action. She recorded eight shutouts with

an 85.7 save percentage. Houser believes she's one of the best to ever man the Wildcat cage.

"Goalie is one play we don't have to worry about," Houser said. "Katie has been all over the place playing. She spends a ton of time working on her game on her own. She was good last year and she looks even better this year."

Osborne has committed to playing at Division I Wake Forest next season.

Taylor Tompkins and Mackenzie Wirth also return for their senior seasons. Tompkins was named to the TVL first team at midfielder while Wirth was a second-team selection last year.

"Taylor's probably our most skilled player," Houser said. "She's been a four-year varsity player and was really a catalyst to what we

did last year."

Tompkins has committed to Division I Providence.

Wirth also had the Wildcat offense clicking on all cylinders. "She is a really good, strong player," Houser said. "It's nice having her on the right side. She's a good tackler and passer."

Junior Hattie Kuhns made the TVL's honorable mention list a year ago and returns at forward.

"She really got better all year long," Houser said. "She was at her best in the playoffs, and we are looking for another good year from her."

Houser is also counting on Lauren Fried in the midfield after the junior saw significant minutes last season.

Seniors Justice Winters, Michaeli Wise, Sierra Stephens and Stephanie Byers could find themselves in the

backfield mix, while senior Rachel Stroup is vying for playing time at forward.

"We lost our deep defenders and inners, so we are going to have to find some people to fill in those slots," Houser said.

"I really feel like we have depth at every position," Houser said. "That's not something we've always had."

With the loss of Mifflin County and State College to the Mid-Penn Conference and the addition of Lancaster Country Day, the TVL is now a six-team field hockey league.

Houser expects the Wildcats to contend for another crown, with the biggest challenges coming from East Juniata, Newport and Line Mountain.



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