

## EAST JUNIATA FIELD HOCKEY

# First-year coach has high hopes for young team

By **BOB GAINES**

*Sentinel correspondent*

**COCOLAMUS** — Forgive East Juniata field hockey coach Billie Haines for her exuberance, but the Tigers just might be a contender.

“We are small, but we are mighty,” said the first-year coach. “We will be in shape. We will win. We have the attitude that will make us successful.”

They do have some talent, beginning with two outstanding seniors back for their final year as Tigers — defender Mackenzie Geedy and forward/midfielder Marisa Dunn.

“It will be very beneficial to our younger players to have the direction from these two experienced players on all parts of the field,” Haines said.

The Tigers lose Alyssa Schlegel — the leading scorer from last season’s squad — but still have plenty of firepower, beginning with Hunter Hepner and Stephanie Dressler.

“Hunter has a great stick, is fast, and has a wonderful ability to give constructive criticism to our younger players without being hard on them,” Haines said. “Stephanie is an amazing player. She has great stick work, can shoot well and see the pass from all over the field.”

Midfielder Serina Span-

## AT A GLANCE

### EAST JUNIATA TIGERS

District 4, Class AA

Coach: Billie Haines, assisted by Lynlee Paine and Jenna Brinninger  
2011: 8-8-2, 3-7-2  
Tri-Valley League

cake also will see action on the front line and midfield.

“Serina is such a calm, focused player,” Haines said. “And she can run all day.”

Haines predicts a lot of scoring from the left side of the field where Courtney Elsasser and Sarah Earnest should shine.

Likewise, the East Juniata defense should be sound with Lydia Strawser moving up to become the starting goalkeeper.

“Lydia had some experience playing that position last year,” Haines said. “I’m confident in her ability to keep the ball out of the cage.”

Sophomores Megan Hart and Sarah Karper both possess strong sticks.

“Megan has incredible speed, a strong stick and a great sense of positioning,” Haines said. “Sarah has been working on her reverse stick work. She will be responsible for working the ball off the sideline and looking to score our goals.”

Haines also welcomes a su-

perb group of ninth graders, including Brea Tussey, Bethany Kahley, Jess Page, Alleighcia Hepner, Lydia Koser and Arden Benner.

County did lose in that first state game, being the District 6 defending champion is something this team can look back on. It’s a motivation factor, Maclay said. Certainly once you get there you want to go back.

In the Mid-Penn it will be more difficult, but Mifflin County will not back down from that challenge.

“I think it’s an incredi-



Sentinel photo by BUFFIE BOYER

Members of the East Juniata High School field hockey team are, from left, Hunter Hepner, Marisa Dunn, Mackenzie Geedy and Steph Dressler; middle, manager Annika Koser, Serina Spancake, Sarah Karper, Megan Hart, Lydia Strawser, Sarah Ernest, Bethany Kahley, Courtney Elsasser and manager Caitlin Elsasser; back, coach Billie Haines, Lydia Koser, Jessica Page, Brea Tussey, Alleighcia Hepner, Arden Benner and coach Lynlee Payne.

perb group of ninth graders, including Brea Tussey, Bethany Kahley, Jess Page, Alleighcia Hepner, Lydia Koser and Arden Benner.

“These younger players are all very versatile,” Haines said. “They take direction really well and are willing to do whatever it takes to get the ball up the field. I’m very excited to see how they mature

and progress over the season. They have great attitudes.”

That’s another major strength for this year’s Tigers.

“I think attitude is what makes my whole team so promising,” Haines said. “The girls are so positive. They’ve been working together since they were young. They are comfortable with one another and get along re-

ally well.”

In 2011, East Juniata’s season ended in the first round of the District 4 Class AA tournament. First, the Tigers have to get past the other teams in the Tri-Valley League.

“We look to improve on that,” Haines said. “From what I gather Greenwood and Newport are tough, but I ex-

pect to be right there with them.”

Haines may be new to the East Juniata varsity, but she’s well aware that success is never easy.

“We’ll take it one game at a time, but the sky’s the limit with this group,” she said. “I look forward to see how much we progress over the season. It’s going to be exciting.”

## Huskies

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field hockey roster.

“They’re good,” Maclay said vividly of the conference. “One of the good things that we’ll have playing in the Mid-Penn is that our girls will get a lot more exposure than in the TVL.”

And though Mifflin

bly motivating force for them,” Maclay said. “I think that makes this team really hungry.”

To go along with being hungry for another district crown, Mifflin County had a young group of players come up through the ranks this season that Maclay said are very promising.

The group of freshmen and sophomores can chal-

lenge the everyday players for Maclay and give the Huskies a competitive edge at practice.

“Everyone is working hard in practice and we’re looking forward to a great season,” she said.

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