

EAST JUNIATA FIELD HOCKEY

Juniata, East Juniata forge hockey cooperative

By **JEFF FISHBEIN**

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COCOLAMUS — East Juniata's field hockey team starts the season as the fourth cooperative effort in the school district, and the second based at the smaller high school.

The biggest benefits the joint team will bring into the season are the ability to play junior varsity games, and more depth on the roster.

But, in many ways, unknowns factor into play as the coaching staff — which was East Juniata's last year — gets to know the girls from the Mifflintown school.

Billie Haines was a rookie coach a year ago, and admits she doesn't have a lot of knowledge of the Juniata program hers absorbed. She is aware that the girls from the other school have not experienced the same coach two years straight in their careers — last fall, Becky Loy became the sixth coach in as many seasons for Juniata.

"I'm not worried about that. It may even make it easier on me," Haines said. "They are used to changing and adapting to each coach's particular style of play. They've been very coachable and willing to try anything we ask."

And, she said, the blending of the two has been nothing but positive thus far.

"I'm very lucky as a coach to have things work so smoothly," she said. "The summer did give us a chance to meet one another and begin to get to know one another. The Juniata girls are excited to be part of the team and we are lucky to have them join. They are going to bring a lot of good play to the field."

One thing Haines had plenty to say about was the in-



Sentinel photo by BRADLEY KREITZER

Members of the East Juniata field hockey team are, from left, front, Autumn Young, Laine Guiser, Brandi Owens, Maddy Walters, Annika Koser and Sydney Colyer; second row, manager Sarah Goss, Minna Digon, Hannah Kauffman, Genesis Campbell, Bethany Kahley, Arden Benner, Lydia Koser, Alleighcia Hepner, Jess Page and manager Sarah Irvin; third row, Brea Tussey, Hannah Welfley, Jensen Swartz, Makenzie Bishop, Jessie Wagner, Danielle Ames, Sarah Karper, Nala Brackbill, Maranda Bossert, Katie Searer, Megan Hart, Abby Myers and Samantha Diem; fourth row, Courtney Elsasser, Serina Spancake, Katie McLaughlin, Jenn Houtz, Lydia Strawser, Stephanie Dressler, Caitlin Hoover, Elizabeth McClure, Hunter Hepner and Megan Yeager.

AT A GLANCE

EAST JUNIATA TIGERS

District 4, Class AA

Coach: Billie Haynes and Lynlee Payne

crease in numbers. Neither school had JV last year; Juniata barely had the statutory minimum to play at times. Both schools were forced to play underclassmen, including numerous freshmen who lacked real-world experience.

"Having a deep bench is always reassuring for a coach," Haines explained — injuries, or just fatigue are less of a concern.

"This year we should be able to focus on each game individually knowing we can

play with every team in the league and then work our way into postseason play," she said. "We improved greatly over the course of the year and I believe we will just pick up where we left off and continue to move forward with great success."

Also, she said, having more players promotes competition within the team: "It will push the girls to do their best at practice and be on their best behavior. This will benefit the team greatly."

Neither team lost many players to graduation, although East Juniata — a playoff team a year ago — lost Marissa Dunn and Mackenzie Geedy, a pair of starters who were multidimensional players. There will be a number of seniors back — six from East

Juniata and four from Juniata — which gives the Tigers an experience edge going into the Tri-Valley League schedule.

"With so many experienced players, we have leaders all over the field that will be able to guide the newer players on how we work the ball down the field," Haines noted. "The new girls defi-

nately possess stick skills. The main focus will be working together. I'm so impressed by the attitudes of both teams — so willing to help each other out and get along."

The coaches mainly worked with the juniors and seniors over the summer, she said, so the younger players represent the biggest un-

known going into the season.

"The girls coming up from junior high are very young and do not have a lot of experience. Any one of them will have potential to earn playing time in the varsity game, but right now it is too early to tell," she said.

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