

BELLEVILLE MENNONITE BOYS SOCCER

Thunder aim to make some noise in District 6

By **GREG WILLIAMS**

Sentinel correspondent

BELLEVILLE — The Belleville Thunder hopes the pain of a disappointing end to what was shaping up to be a phenomenal season proves a necessary step toward reaching their ultimate goal.

With their title hopes dashed for at least another year after falling to Bishop McCort in the District 6 Class A semifinal a year ago, the veteran Thunder are ready to learn from the heartache.

“Everything is a process that you have to go through and you have to go through some tough times to get to where you want to go to,” Belleville Mennonite coach Brian Renno said. “Our senior class has been to the playoffs for three years now, so they have an understanding of what’s at stake.

“This could be the year,” Renno added. “With our six seniors, they want to get back into the post-season, and from there, anything can happen.”

The Thunder — well, the team that became the Thunder when the school adopted a new nickname last spring — finished the regular season at 14-3-1 but were dealt a crushing blow when McCort bumped them out of the playoffs for the second time in as many seasons.

Renno, now entering his seventh year as head coach, returns most of the starting 11 and likes how his squad hasn’t let its latest playoff performance dampen any enthusiasm for the upcoming season.

Offensively, the Thunder are counting on the talents of senior Andrew Miller, who should reach the 100-goal plateau. Miller tallied 43 goals and 12 assists a year ago in bolstering the Belleville

Mennonite attack.

“Andrew’s strengths would be his speed and quickness,” Renno said. “He is very good in the open field, if he can get turned; he is very tough to defend. Also, he moves well without the ball to position himself to receive in open space. He has worked on his ball striking and is doing a great job of keeping his shots low and directed toward the outer thirds of the frame.

“Andrew’s scoring ability has been monumental in regards to our success the last three years,” Renno added. “Putting the ball in the back of the net comes natural for him.”

With Miller garnering most of the attention from opposing defenses, Renno is hopeful he can create scoring opportunities for Noah Anders. The sophomore striker notched 10 goals and three assists in 2012.

“Noah should step into that area and is a great finisher,” Renno said. “Noah and Andrew are really the cogs in our offense; they are the horses up front.”

Sophomore Nick Beaulieu could also add a scoring threat off the bench.

“He’s progressing well,” Renno said of his young striker. “He’s got a good work ethic.”

The Thunder’s midfield did lose the likes of Jung Kim, who Renno said, “provided cohesiveness in the middle. He might not have a lot of stats, but his vision of the field was vital to the success that we had.”

Austin Byler returns to fill the other central midfield slot. Renno has big expectations from his senior starter.

“We’re expecting a breakout year from him, managing the midfield and breaking up balls,” he said.

The play of senior Alex



Sentinel photo by
BRADLEY KREITZER

Members of the Belleville Mennonite boys soccer team are, from left, front, Josiah Yoder, Noah Anders, Nickolas Beaulieu, Sam Kauffman, Joe Treaster and Derek Byler; back, Sam Morgan, Colin Peachey, Andrew Miller, Austin Byler, Jake Knable, Josh Pollock and Kyle Derstein. Alex Suydam also is a member of the team.

AT A GLANCE

BELLEVILLE MENNONITE THUNDER

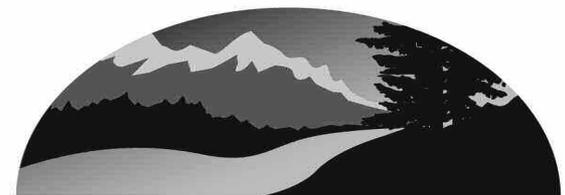
District 6, Class A

Coach: Brian Renno, assisted by Curt Yoder
2012: 14-4-1

Suydam on the outside could create additional scoring opportunities.

“We need to keep possession on the outside, so we can open up the middle of the

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