

MIDD-WEST BOYS SOCCER

Mustangs look to improve, hold up soccer tradition

By ZACH KNEPP

Sentinel correspondent

MIDDLEBURG — For most teams, picking up a win in the playoffs means the season was a success.

But most teams are not the boys soccer squad from Middle-West. The Mustangs have taken over the expectations built upon decades of local soccer dominance by Middleburg and West Snyder and have continued to excel since the schools were merged a decade ago.

The 2012 Middle-West season was not a championship campaign. Instead, the Mustangs needed every win they could obtain to finish with a winning mark on the year. The 11-9 record was good enough for a trip to the District 4 Class AA tournament, where the Mustangs picked up an opening-round win over Shamokin before an early exit in the quarterfinals with a heartbreaking 1-0 loss to Warrior Run in overtime.

Coach Chris Sauer is entering his ninth year as head of the program in Middleburg and would like to improve on last year's results. To do so, he may have to produce one of his best years working the sideline.

Sauer saw three first-team Heartland Athletic Conference Division I all-stars graduate from last year's team. Defender Colton Keister, midfielder Austin Good and forward Jake Keister will be tough to replace as they led the squad up the middle on both offense and defense.

Keeper Austin Hockenbrock also graduated after a solid senior season anchoring the Middle-West defense.

The good news for Sauer is that despite losing his best players from last year, he has a high number of players re-



Sentinel photo by JEFF FISHBEIN

Members of the Middle-West boys soccer team are, from left, front, Austin Shellhammer, Dylan Hain, Evan Herbster, Devaughn Johns, Sebastian Callender and Mitchell Coleman; middle, Trevor Stuck, Ty Ross, Corey Stauffer, Nicholas Schmoyer, Eric Liddington, Zane Leister and Logan Klinepeter; back, Landry Harman, Malik Bethea, Tyler Arbogast, Chris Sheaffer, Conner Inch, Elijah Fisher and Andrew Sassaman. Quinton Davis and Tanner Ebright also are members of the team.

AT A GLANCE

MIDD-WEST MUSTANGS

District 4, Class AA

Coach: Chris Sauer, assisted by Mark Ferster, John Gibboney and Matt Sankey
 2012: 11-9, 9-5 Heartland Conference Division I

turning with varsity experience.

"We have a lot of players entering their third season as varsity players," Sauer said. "These players know how to work hard and have the attitude to work for one another."

The majority of the experience coming back for Middle-West is in the defense and midfield. Defenders Trevor Stuck, Quinton Davis, Chris Sheaffer and Logan

Klinepeter should be able to keep the opposition's attack at bay.

Midfielders Tyler Arbogast, Landry Harman and Andrew Sassaman also return and will be counted on to lead the Mustangs on both ends of the field.

Ty Ross and Tanner Ebright should both see a lot of time up front as the only returning forwards for coach Sauer. Each will have to produce offensively for the Mustangs to return to the glory years of the program.

"We need to score more consistently," Sauer observed.

Sauer also believes his squad will need to cut down on the amount of soft goals surrendered.

Two keepers are hoping to win the starting job and do their part to keep the easy

goals off the books. Senior Elijah Fisher and junior Nic Schmoyer both have looked good in the preseason, Sauer said.

"It is a good competition in goal. Either way we will have both a solid starter and good backup," he said.

Sauer also has a large group of new players looking to make their mark this season. Sebastian Callender, Devaughn Johns, Eric Liddington, Zane Leister, Evan Herbster, Mitchell Coleman, Austin Shellhammer, Dylan Hain, Malik Bethea and Conner Inch are all trying to earn a varsity letter.

Sauer is realistic with his goals for this season. Usually he is very blunt in naming taking home a district title as the team's goal. This year he wants his team to compete in

the top half of the Heartland Athletic Conference's Division I (the Mustangs were 9-5 last year) and be a contender in the District 4 tournament.

"Preseason has been very positive. We just need everyone to stay healthy for the start of the season," Sauer said.

Middle-West opens up its season at Millville on Aug. 30.

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