

MIFFLIN COUNTY GIRLS SOCCER

New coach, new faces, new challenges for Huskies

By **SARAH WHITESEL**

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LEWISTOWN — The returning members of the Mifflin County girls soccer team can probably remember every detail of every win last season. In a season where the goals were hard to come by and the competition was stiff as the Huskies made their debut into the Mid-Penn Conference Commonwealth Division, wins were few and far between.

In fact the girls only walked away with two Ws, one of which was non-conference — but it was impossible to see any residual frustrations from last year as the girls entered into 2013's preseason practice.

New coach Trevor Eckley said the team is looking up and has a lot of heart, and that's exactly what it will need as it has some tough odds to overcome in its third year of existence.

The Commonwealth Division is home to some soccer powerhouses — including Cumberland Valley, which won the final spring state championship in 2012 and was runner-up in its class the next fall.

The Huskies will need to replace eight seniors from last year's graduating class, and Eckley will face the challenges of being the team's third coach in as many years. However, Eckley and company are facing each challenge one at a time.

In terms of his experience as a new coach, Eckley conceded the girls will need to make a few adjustments in the preseason since every coach has a different style, but he was an assistant on the team in 2011 and also helped coach at Indian Val-

ley, so a certain level of familiarity already exist between him and the team.

"With every coach you get different preseason challenges. Just a lot of unknowns there, but we've been working through them and it's been really good," Eckley said.

Outside of adjustments between the new coaching staff and the team, another big change the Huskies face is the absence of key players from last year's team. After losing eight to graduation — including Ellee Harpster, Erika Shawver, Megan Becker and Halle Fisher, all of whom Eckley described as high impact players — the team has been spending time in the preseason determining where to best place its talent.

One key spot to fill is keeper. Fisher protected the net last year, and this year Eckley has two athletes vying to become her replacement. Junior Sage Heckendorn is one of those competitors, and Eckley said Heckendorn is a versatile enough to play either on the field or before the net, so there's a chance she'll be doing both. Mackenzie Bressler, a sophomore and the other candidate for keeper, may split time with Heckendorn.

On the field, Eckley is looking to his strong junior class to provide drive and talent — he's also looking for leadership from his seniors.

"It's been a young team the last couple of years. Now those girls are a little bit older, and it's time to show what they can do," Eckley said.

The seniors Eckley is looking to include Breanna Cline, Taylor Dietrich and Blake Yoder. Cline in particular will be crucial, as Eck-



Sentinel photo by BRADLEY KREITZER

Members of the Mifflin County girls soccer team are, from left, front, Blake Yoder, Taylor Dietrich, Breanna Cline, Kelsey Russler and Emily Ware; second row, Allison Besch, Alyssa Johnson, Kelsie Kennedy, Mackenzie Bressler, Bryce Papp, Haley Predix, Rebecca Peachey and Laurel Maclay; third row, Sarah Donahey, Alexis Kibe, Sage Heckendorn-Fike, Kelsey Spicher, Courtney Page, Kaitlyn Eckley and Mackenzie Sweitzer.

AT A GLANCE

MIFFLIN COUNTY HUSKIES

District 6, Class AAA

Coach: Trevor Eckley, assisted by Jeremy Herwig and Scott Predix
2012: 2-16, 1-15 Mid-Penn Commonwealth Division

ley said he looks to her and junior Kelsey Spicher to anchor the defense.

On the other end of the field, juniors Kaitlyn Eckley

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for a great season!**



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