

JUNIATA GIRLS SOCCER

Veteran squad looks to return to district title game

By **KENNY VARNER**

Sentinel correspondent

MIFFLINTOWN — After coming up just one win shy of a District 6 Class AA title a year ago, the Juniata girls soccer program brings back quite an experienced team from last year's squad.

The Indians lost just one player from last year's team, which finished in the district championship game, a rematch with Forest Hills that ended on penalty kicks.

Lauren Baublitz is the only player that the second-year coach lost from last year's team, so the team comes in as a group of seasoned veterans ready for the upcoming season.

Joelle Winey will be coming back at goalie. On defense, Juniata brings back Anna Hershey, Megan Shoop, Allison Kint, Riley Duck, Jenna Bretz and Tori Warfel.

In the midfield the Indians have veterans Carly Burns, Janelle Swartz and Lauren Lock, and up front, Micheh Horning, Kristen Baublitz, Elizabeth Ritzman and Lexi Zimmerman all return.

"Those are the girls that got most of the varsity time last year," Strawser said. "We have three freshmen who all could see some varsity time. We have some sophomores as well.

"We actually have a lot of girls that can see varsity time. I'd almost have to mention every player because at any time they could see varsity time," he said.

With all the starters back from last year's team and a full bench of players, the future looks promising for the team if all goes well.

"I have never been good



Sentinel photo by BUFFIE BOYER

Members of the Juniata girls soccer team are, from left, front, Janelle Swartz, Brenna Strawser, Sam Knepp, Jenna Bretz, Brianne Kell, Anna Hershey, Abena Dufie and Caitlin Reichard; middle, Amber Myers, Lauren Lock, Megan Shoop, Mady Marrone, Carly Burns, Joelle Winey, Micheh Horning, Tori Warfel and McKala Dressler; back, coach Brian Strawser, manager Rachel Bargo, Allison Kint, Christen Baublitz, Katie Lock, Elisabeth Ritzman, Cecilia Fitzgerald, Rylee Duck, Julie Swartz, Lexie Zimmerman and coach Chris Alderfer. Hannah Shertzer also is a member.

AT A GLANCE

JUNIATA INDIANS

District 6, Class AA

Coach: Brian Strawser, assisted by Chris Alderfer

2012: 14-5-1, 9-2-1 Tri-Valley League

at predicting the future but on paper everything looks promising for us. We have 10 starters back," Strawser said. "I think we will be competitive in the league this year. I hope to be very competitive in the district playoff as well. There are a lot of variables that come into play and that is something I learned over the years in coaching. You have to stay healthy, get healthy and come together as team.

"Also, all good teams have a little bit of luck and

we need to have that, too," he admitted. "I could make some bold predictions but there are so many variables that come into play that I feel good about where we're at, I feel good about the girls we bring back, with the experience we were able to pick up last year. I really think we can pick up and compete with anybody."

The strength this year will come from all the experience the returning players got last season, Strawser said.

"Last year we were pretty young and we started four freshman and we played five so the experience they bring back with them (is key)," Strawser said. "This year we have a big group of seniors where last year we just had one. I think the amount of experience we got last year, having made a

strong run through the post-season so that experience along with the confidence we built from last year and bringing that back will be a strength that we have."

Contenders for the Tri-Valley League are always hard to determine before the season, especially with some strong teams that seem to always be in the hunt for the title.

"Of course we would like to say that we would be one of those teams that's going to be battling for a league championship," Strawser said. "But somebody's going to have to knock off East Juniata, whose been there the last couple years, and I think Halifax has a strong team back this year. I think they are also going to be a contender.

"I think if you break down the league into two halves those would be the

three teams that probably have the best shot of being in the top half but you can never count out some other teams," he said. "I think you will see more parity in the league this year."

The goals for this year's team are ones that the coach thinks could be very real possibilities.

"Obviously we want compete for a Tri-Valley League championship," Strawser said. "Last year,

we came just short in the District 6 Class AA championship game so we would like to get back to that again. There has been a pretty high bar set here at Juniata and we would like to raise it."

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