

Lacrosse

Confidence part of game for UA's Harer

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By PAUL BATTERSON
This Week Staff Writer

Kevyn Harer remembers exactly how she felt -- a mixture of fear, shock and awe -- the last time the Upper Arlington High School girls lacrosse team faced Cincinnati Sycamore.

Called up as a backup for starting goalie Katie Fisher, Harer watched as the Aviators took a 4-0 lead in the first five minutes en route to a 9-7 victory in the Division I state final last season.

"When Katie struggled early on against them, I kept saying to myself, 'Please don't put me in. I beg of you,'" Harer said.

Harer, a sophomore, now is the starter, and she will be in action Saturday when Sycamore visits. The Aviators had won 32 in a row entering last Tuesday's game against Cincinnati Mount Notre Dame.

"Kevyn's attitude has completely changed from a year ago. Now she has complete confidence in herself," coach Lynda McCandlish said. "She has done a great job and had some really big saves. She's stepped up more than people could have ever expected."

Through 13 games, UA had outscored the opposition a combined 193-85.

But it typically struggles against Sycamore. The Bears have lost to the Aviators three times since 2004, and this year Sycamore opened 12-0 and was outscoring its opponents an average of 15.1-3.5.

Harer said defeating Columbus Academy 10-7 on April 24 boosted her confidence.

"Two years ago, we tied Academy in the regular season and lost to them in the regional final, so I went into that game real nervous and unsure of how I was going to do," Harer said. "The first few goals they had on me I didn't even have a fighting chance on. After a timeout, I got the momentum going."

At the end of last season, it appeared Harer again would be waiting this season behind Fisher, who had 214 saves and a 75 percent save percentage and was named as an All-American. But Fisher decided not to come back for her senior year.

"Since this is my first year as a coach, I never had the chance to work with Katie Fisher. But from everything I heard, she was great," McCandlish said. "I think the girls were disappointed, but every year you have to step up and replace the people who are gone. Your team has to adjust."

"Coming into the season, Kevyn put a lot of pressure on herself. She has a great attitude and this is her first year on varsity. I'm excited to see how far she can go."

McCandlish said the ability to shake off slow starts is critical for a goalie.

"The hardest part is remembering each goal that gets in is not your fault," Harer said. "You have to accept each one that gets past you and go, 'OK, we'll get the next one.'"

Harer learned by watching her brother Kyle, who played for state championship teams at UA in 2004 and 2005. Kyle is a goalie for Cornell, transferring there after Butler dropped its program last year.

Kevyn said her brother helped her make the transition from playing in the midfield to playing goalie when she was in the eighth grade.

"I wasn't sure that I was going to make the eighth-grade team, but I knew they needed a goalie," she said. "Knowing field position and how a defense is supposed to react helps. The hardest part is learning the angles. You have to be able to time things just right."

The Sycamore game is at the end of the brutal stretch for UA. The Bears, who were sixth in the first SticksUp.com Division I poll, defeated fourth-ranked Academy and then defeated second-ranked Chagrin Falls 14-9 last Saturday before playing eighth-ranked Worthington Kilbourne last Tuesday. Chagrin Falls was tied with Medina for second.

"Most of our early games the scores haven't been that close," McCandlish said. "We are excited for those games that are going to be good tests for us. We want to see how we can play when a team takes it to us. That's what determines how good a team is."

"That's how we need to go into the tournament," Harer said. "Beating Sycamore we would get the momentum for the tournament. If we beat them, we'll be unstoppable."