

## Sports News

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**Bears confident they're back on state title track**

By MICHAEL ALWOOD

When the Upper Arlington High School girls lacrosse team opens its 2007 season with a trip to Thomas Worthington today, the Golden Bears will certainly be focused on the host Cardinals as they are one of the handful of Central Ohio teams the Bears expect to contend with this year.

But in the back of the Bears' minds they might also be giving some thought to a night in late May of last year when all their hopes and dreams went out the window in an 11-10 loss to Columbus Academy, which kept Arlington from a shot at a third consecutive Division I state championship.

Coach Wendy Gallapoo, who is guiding UA for a 16th season and who led the Bears to state titles in 2002, 2004 and 2005, said the loss to the Vikings in the district final is still with the Bears.

"I think there's definitely a renewed intensity to redeem last year's loss," she said. "I think we really thought we deserved it and were good enough to be in that championship game. But we just didn't have the game we needed to be there and finished a couple of games too early."

The 2006 Arlington squad (which finished with a 14-3-1 record) was a talented, swift and able group, but the same words can be used to describe the current team and perhaps a little more emphatically.

The team will revolve around its three captains: seniors Erika Brooker (midfield), Tori Conway (midfield) and Molly Everett (midfield).

"I don't know if there's anyone playing better lacrosse in Ohio than Molly Everett," Gallapoo said. "She really is a phenomenal player and she's improved significantly. Tori Conway is another player who I think is one of the best players in the state. Those two players can get a lot accomplished and they obviously have a lot of support players as well."

The Bears also have seniors Maggie McGreevy (defense) and Chelsea Kuznik (defense), juniors Nancy Baker (attack), Samantha Ullum (defense), Caroline Blosser (midfield), Caitlin Oberlin (defense), Lindsey Godard (midfield), Elizabeth Narwicz (attack) and goalie Katie Fisher returning to varsity.

In Fisher the Bears have a player who has started every game of her high-school career and brings far more experience to the field than one usually sees in a junior.

"I think the whole team has a huge amount of confidence in Katie," Gallapoo said. "It brings a different feel to the low defense when you have a goalie who can make a lot of stops for your team, versus your defenders making a lot of stops. And our entire defense are returning varsity players. So I think I feel very confident in our defense and I just want to see them play with intensity."

Also returning to varsity are sophomores Kelly Mason (defense) and Erin Junk (attack) and new to the squad are sophomores Marissa Henderson (defense) and Avery Toothman (attack) plus freshmen Erin Williams (defense) and Alice O'Neill (attack).

It should surprise no one that this year's UA team could be as fast as or even faster than last year's.

"For certain we have a lot of speed," Gallapoo said. "When we picked players to move up the biggest factor probably was speed. We're definitely not short on the speed. A lot of speed can make a lot of opportunities on the field. And we focus too on our stick work and we've got the beginnings of what I think is a really solid team. And I think dreaming high and expecting high is definitely within the realm of possibility."

Gallapoo said the key threats to Arlington dominance of the region should come from today's opponent Thomas Worthington plus Dublin Jerome and Academy, while statewide she expects Cleveland Heights and Hathaway Brown to be back at the top of their games.

But the coach said fighting through the local talent might be more difficult than it has ever been.

"I think locally we're looking at Thomas, Jerome and Academy as some of the top contenders," she said. "But I think (Columbus School for Girls) could get by a number of teams. They've got a lot of young guns on their squad that have a lot of club experience. No team is easy and that's a good thing. It will make all the teams in this area much, much stronger."

Following today's season opener, the Bears will travel to Illinois Saturday to play Loyola Glenview and Thayer Academy.



News photo by Michael Alwood  
Upper Arlington captains Erika Brooker (left) and Tori Conway will help guide the Golden Bears girls lacrosse team through the 2007 season. Not pictured: captain Molly Everett.