

Dallas young, talented

If it's true that there is strength in numbers, the Dallas High School field hockey team should be tough to beat in 2005. Second-year head coach Mary Kate Stauffer welcomed 37 players to the opening of preseason practice.

"We have a good nucleus returning and we have a big freshman class," said Stauffer, who guided the Mountaineers to a 7-9-1 record and a playoff berth a year ago.

The Mountaineers return six starters from a year ago, including team captains Elizabeth Heintz and junior Stef Pace. Heintz, the team's lone senior, will play defense while Pace could split time between defense and midfield.

"Our captains have been outstanding," said Stauffer. "They are excellent leaders and are very encouraging to the other players. They lead by example and have displayed a great work rate."

The other returning starters are all sophomores, including Paige Selenski, Alyssa Pyros, Lauren Zimmiski and Lindsey Davenport. Selenski and Pyros will likely play in the midfield, Zimmiski is expected to anchor the defense, and Davenport returns in goal.

Selenski is one of the top young players in the region as evidenced by her spot on the USA Junior National team, while Pyros earned some added confidence while helping the Dallas soccer team to the state playoffs last spring.

"Paige is so fundamentally sound that she makes the game look easy sometimes," said Stauffer. "She plays with a great deal of finesse and confidence. Alyssa had a great experience with the soccer team and it has carried over to this season. She knows that a team can be successful even if they are young."

Davenport appears more relaxed with a varsity season under her belt. "She is young, but she is really good," said Stauffer. "She is playing with much more confidence this



FOR THE POST/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK
Mary Kate Stauffer enters her second season at Dallas.

DALLAS

year."

Other players expected to make a big impact this season include juniors Marissa Wright and Julie Pettit, as well as sophomores Bailey Van Jura and Courtney Thomas. Wright and Thomas will see time at forward while Van Jura and Thomas will play defense.

Stauffer hopes the team can avoid the mental lapses that cost them a few victories last season. "We lost three or four games that we shouldn't have last year," she said. "We need to be mentally tougher and I think we will be with a year of experience."

With that, Stauffer and the Mounts are looking for a deeper run in the postseason.

"We're showing more confidence and having more fun so far this season," said Stauffer. "We're hoping that leads us to a deeper run in the playoffs."

Lady Knights ready for 2005

A new awakening

A winning tradition doesn't come without a price. With winning comes high expectations and when those expectations aren't met, the hurt can be that much worse.

The Lake-Lehman field hockey team has achieved at such a high level during the last two decades that it learned this lesson the hard way in 2004 when it lost to Wyoming Seminary in the district playoffs and failed to advance to the state tournament.

"That loss was a rude awakening for our program," said veteran head coach Jean Lipski. "We learned that if you don't play your hardest all the time, you could be a good team and still end up sitting at home when the state playoffs roll around."

The Knights are determined to avoid a repeat of last season's disappointment.

"We have a phenomenal group of kids who are focusing on winning a district championship," said Lipski. "With that, they have their sights set on returning to the state playoffs."

Traci Ragukas, Lois Kaschenbach, Jaime Lipski and Jill Chocallo are the only full-time starters who return to this year's line-up.



FOR THE POST/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK
Lake-Lehman's Traci Ragukas tries to score past goalkeeper Margo Johnson during practice.

LAKE-LEHMAN

Ragukas, who became the first All-American in the program's history a year ago, returns at forward along with Chocallo while Kaschenbach and Chocallo will anchor the midfield.

"There is a good mixture on this team," said Lipski. "We have some very good veterans and we have some good newcomers. It is a really solid group."

Despite having seven starting positions to fill, Lipski remains pleased.

"We have several kids are

ready to step up and take advantage of the opportunity to get some more playing time," she said. "We're fast and talented overall. We just need to find the right combination of players."

Senior Margo Johnson and junior Caroline Boris are challenging for playing time as goalkeeper. "We're comfortable with Margo or Caroline in goal," said Lipski. "They have both played well in the preseason."

Sophomore Sami Swingle and freshman Kelcey Amy have looked good at forward. Swingle was the lone freshman on the varsity last year and Amy has earned plenty of experience throughout the summer playing on the U.S. junior national team.

"Sami Swingle has played well in the preseason and seems to have benefited from playing with the varsity as a freshman," Lipski said. "Kelcey Amy is young, but she brings a tremendous amount of experience to our program."

In addition to its physical abilities, Lipski says a good attitude is one of the team's greatest strengths.

"They all love hockey and they show a great deal of heart. They all really like each other and realize that team work is critical to success."

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