

Boys soccer preview

Posted by [jmorona](#) August 20, 2008 08:59AM



Four things Pat Glabincea thinks about the 2008 boys soccer season

1. What has happened to boys soccer in Northeast Ohio? Many good teams, but no blockbusters. Some good individuals, but nobody great like Michael Green of Strongsville and Darlington Nagbe of St. Edward, or Kenny Walker of Wickliffe in 2006. This must be a down year for the boys, but girls soccer in this area is far better.
2. Coaches say St. Ignatius will be the team to beat in Division I, and the Wildcats are good -- but even St. Ignatius coach Mike McLaughlin won't tell you they're great like in 2004-05. The Wildcats are still pretty young, and although they could win state this year, they'll be a better bet next year.
3. Our strongest teams are in Division II, where Bay, Cuyahoga Valley Christian Academy and Walsh Jesuit are all state title contenders, and in Division III, where Hawken is going to be hard to beat. And isn't that something? A down year for boys soccer in The Plain Dealer coverage area, and yet this region could sweep all three divisions at state.
4. Two things CVCA coach Jason Spodnik said that I agree with. One, "Don't be surprised if some average boys teams upset some of the good teams during the season," and two, "The girls will steal the show in soccer this fall."

Teams to watch

Avon Lake: Seven returning lettermen including a trio of forwards - Nick Siko, Dan Ohlemacher and Kevin McNutt - whom coach Dan Olgilvy expects to score. Might be Lorain County's strongest team.

Bay: Will be one of the best teams in the state in Division II. Have added standouts like ODP regional team midfielders/defenders in junior Shane Williams and sophomore Alec Petro to an already- strong lineup which includes sterling midfielders Kyle Hyland and Ian Munro and big- time striker Aaron Adkins.

Brecksville: Always one of the better soccer programs around and has a dynamic sophomore midfielder in Kenny Cunningham, along with three- year starters in midfielders John Smola and Brian Richards. New goalie Danny Miller is also the Bees' hockey goalie.

Copley: New coach in Dave Antel, replacing retired Doug Boerema. Indians have four outstanding starters in goalie Mitch Ivasku and junior brother Kevin, a defender, and junior midfielders Kevin Dressler and Brian Ruhaak.

Cuyahoga Valley Christian Academy: Defending Division II state champion has eight starters back, including standout forward Matt Mason and two Thompson brothers, senior defender Logan and sophomore midfielder Jack. Would be a lock to win state had senior youth national team player Ben Speas not broken his leg.

Hawken: Division III state runners-up should be back in the title hunt with solid seniors in strikers Jake McKay and Dan Wilhelm, midfielders Spencer Mischka and Avery Mainardi, and defender Noah Whitehead. Coach Dani Giulvezan, who teaches a fun-to-watch soccer style, is also high on sophomore Tom Betsa and freshman Tom Granot, both forwards.

Mentor: Nearly 20 seniors on the roster, but the Cardinals lack proven scoring power. Matt Brooks is a proven goalie.

North Olmsted: With 12 seniors and seven starters back, the Eagles will be tough to beat. Their core players are defender Brian Lauer and midfielder Stewart Russell, and juniors in midfielders Kurt Russell, Adam Koehler, John Rodriguez and Mike Gravia.

North Royalton: The sleeper team of 2008 has a topflight striker in Ryan Minick along with two juniors, Derek Porvasnik and Brett Bomba, who also can score. Bears have balance with Bob Cancar and junior Shawn Gross in the midfield, Justin Gunn and junior Josh Shook on defense, and junior Vince Ragone in goal.

St. Edward: Yes, the Eagles lost junior striker Joey Haught to the Premier Soccer Academies, but coach Tony Dore will get scoring from Jordan Smigel, Adam Mackson and junior Pat Murray, and his defense, led by seniors Karal Helfrich and Jimmy O'Brien and sophomore Ian Stalker, is tough. Eagles will be better than people expect.

St. Ignatius: On paper, the best team in Division I. Coach Mike McLaughlin has 10 seniors and 10 underclassmen. Very strong midfield with Denio Leone, Ty Smith and sophomore Yianni Sarris could limit playing time for sophomore Luke Blades, whose two older brothers were All-Ohio midfielders. This team has the makings of the Wildcats' 2004-05 powerhouses.

Strongsville: The always-good Mustangs lost Plain Dealer MVP Michael Green but return solid players like goalie Joe Rottinger, center back Alex Kalinowski, midfielder Mike Verdile and defender Will Kiffer, and junior midfielders Mike Matlock and Matt Griesinger. Precision passing team but must find ways to score.

Walsh Jesuit: The 2006 Division II state champ has 11 seniors, seven of whom start. Warriors are led by defenders Matt Greene and Sean Coyne, and have scoring punch with Patrick Brennan, Allain Beauvais and freshman Ross Martin.

Westlake: Maybe a year away from being a powerhouse. Good young talent but does have good seniors in goalie Tim Hipskind and midfielder-sweeper Vincent Stellato.

Players to watch

Aaron Adkins, Sr., Bay: This speedy striker scored 23 goals last season and was stronger in the second half of the season.

Kavon Afsarifad, Jr., St. Ignatius: His name is hard to pronounce, and opponents will find it even harder to dribble a ball by this topflight defender.

Patrick Brennan, Sr., Walsh Jesuit: This center midfielder is one of the speediest players in the state. He had five goals and four assists last season, and will surely up those totals.

Sean Coyne, Sr., Walsh Jesuit: The Warriors defender was a big reason his club team, Everest, finished second in a national tournament in Arkansas over the summer.

Kenny Cunningham, Soph., Brecksville: It's hard to imagine a sophomore being this physically dominant in the midfield, but this kid is.

Kyle Hyland, Sr., Bay: This ODP player is finally healthy after three injury-riddled seasons -- he suffered a broken leg twice last season -- and has also grown six inches to 5-8, so look out for this midfielder.

Brian Lauer, Sr., North Olmsted: A four-year starter and a three-time All-Southwestern Conference defender, he's a good reason the Eagles were 12-3-4 last season.

Matt Mason, Sr., CVCA: He's healthy and should have a banner year at forward. Was Division II state champ Royals' second-best scorer last season with 17 goals and 10 assists.

Jake McKay, Sr., Hawken: One of the area's few true scoring threats, he had 20 goals as a junior.

Ryan Minick, Sr., North Royalton: Because coaches know this kid can score, Bears coach Zoran Mladenovic says "Ryan's got a bull's-eye on his back." He can handle it.

Ian Munro, Sr., Bay: Set school record with 18 assists last season and claims he can run forever. This midfielder is a tireless performer.

Jordan Smigel, Sr., St. Edward: This striker had four goals and eight assists for the Eagles last season, but those totals will increase now that Darlington Nagbe graduated and Joey Haught opted to play for the Premier Soccer Academies in Lorain.

Ben Speas, Sr., CVCA: This youth national team player finally was set to play for the Royals when he broke his leg in California this summer. Can he heal in time to help the team in the playoffs?

Brad Stuver, Sr., Twinsburg: A big-time goalie being recruited by Louisville. He's nimble and good enough to be moved to forward when needed.

Almir Suljevic, Sr., Wickliffe: This Croatian-born goalie and his senior twin, Admir Suljevic, a midfielder, give the Blue Devils two outstanding players.

Categories:

Comments

CharlieChan1 says...

I know this team is not in Cleveland, but Massillon Jackson is in Northeast Ohio and was the Division I

runner-up last year in boys soccer. They return a very strong team this year and is expected to go deep into the playoffs.

Elsie Duplax

<http://www.soccertricks.org>

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