

Speed to burn

By Tim Tarter
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A fast, experienced Carlinville High School girls' soccer team has high expectations as the 2010 season gets underway this weekend as Carlinville hosts the "Spring Cup" at the High School and Loveless Park.

CHS will look to utilize their speed according to head coach Tim Gould, beginning his fourth season at helm. "It's not that I keep one formation every game, but typically we play with three forwards and only three in the back and it's kind of a risk to only have three girls back there, but we feel comfortable with our goalie and our three girls back there being able to handle things," he said. "It really puts the pressure on the other team with us having a lot of fast girls rotating in and out at forward and putting a lot of pressure on them and speeding the game up."

Gould is all smiles this spring because he returns a large number of experienced players from a team that finished 15-9-2 in 2009 while winning the first Regional in school history. That success has helped the program grow as 33 girls are on the combined Varsity/JV roster this spring.

"We've got a good group of seniors and juniors that have been playing varsity or starting varsity for three years and some of them are all-conference players from the past two or three years, so we've got high expectations," Gould said.

Seniors Megan Schlender and Nikki Boente head the list of returning starters. Boente, a 3-year starter and returning all-SCC pick, scored a team-high 12 goals with five assists while Schlender had 6 goals and five assists including four game winners.

"Megan is a returning all-conference player. She's been our team MVP twice before in the past," said Gould. "She's a tireless worker in the middle of the field and an aggressive player."

Boente, who has 34 career goals, also led the team in scoring as a sophomore with 12 goals and six assists. "She's got an opportunity to score a lot more and get to the top of our record books hopefully," Gould said.

Three other seniors that should help the Lady Cavaliers are Megan Broom, Staci Lewis, and Kelli McCaherty. Broom has two years of varsity experience having served as a sub her sophomore and junior years. She'll have a chance to earn a lot of time again this year according to Gould. Lewis played forward last year and had 2 goals and an assist. McCaherty will see time on defense and at forward and will be looked at to be an offensive threat as well.

There are 11 juniors on the roster led by forward Kimmy Dworzysnki, who was an all-SCC performer while scoring 10 goals with seven assists last season.

Nique Byots and Alexis Ritchie both played marking back for the past two years. "Both of them are athletic and strong on the ball and can really mark," said Gould. "They might play some different positions this year too."

Maggie Walker has started at center-mid as a freshman, sweeper as a sophomore, and will probably play one of those positions this year according to Gould. "She's kind of a rock for us," he said. "She's really steady and you know what to expect. She's a really solid player."

Left-mid Susan Herndon has been playing since she was a freshman. "She's really good at winning the ball out wide, serving it in the box, and letting some of our forwards put the ball in the net," Gould said.

Carly Pohlman and Shelby Brown both subbed in the midfield and at forward last year and both of them scored multiple goals. Hannah Carpenter was also a sub in the midfield as a sophomore last year and she'll do the same this year.

Sophomore Leah Keagy moved into a key role with the team as a freshman last year when she took over at goalie when Elizabeth Kelly moved to midfield. Keagy played goal in 17 games and was 13-4 while posting 10 shutouts and allowing just 15 goals. "So far this year, her form has been better than it was last year," said Gould. "I expect big things from Leah this year in the goal."

One player who did not return this season is Kelly. The senior, who is headed to Wright State University to play basketball next season, opted to go out for track this spring to avoid a possible serious injury on the soccer field that might jeopardize her college career.

"For the first two years, Elizabeth was an unbelievable presence in goal and it's not that she wasn't last year," Gould said of Kelly. "She helped us tremendously on the field just being an athlete and being a competitor out in the middle of the field. I think that's what she would have done for us again this year, but I couldn't be happier for her and the things she has ahead of her." There are a total of 12 freshman and five sophomores on the roster and Gould says they are still evaluating the younger players. "There's a big class of freshman and I'm not quite sure where they will fit and where I'll be able to use them," he said. "It's kind of a work in progress to see what they're going to be able to do. Right now, I think without question Maddie Boente will play a bunch, probably at forward and at midfield. She's extremely athletic and strong and she listens and corrects herself after she's heard what to do the next time around."

"Other freshmen that will probably have an opportunity to score some goals for us would be Cassidy Downs at forward," he added. "She'll probably also be our backup goalie. Ellen Young will play a good deal on defense and at midfield as well. It looks like Chloe Walton will probably start out playing some defense and midfield off the bench for us as well and then really I'm not quite sure when we get towards the bottom of the varsity roster who's going to be able to contribute in certain spots. That might change from day to day or week to week. We've got a lot of girls competing for a limited amount of spots."

One thing is for sure. With 33 players on the roster, Gould will have plenty of players to fill out both a varsity and JV squad. Jenna Tate joins the soccer program as the JV coach this spring and Charlie Taylor returns as assistant coach.

"We've got a lot of underclassmen that like to play the game and like to play together, so it should be fun with the JV team," Gould said. "We've got 11 freshmen total, so we've got some freshman games and some freshman tournaments where they're going to see some really good competition and hopefully prepare them for varsity games this year and in the future."

As for competition this year, the Lady Cavaliers schedule has a number of solid programs as well as larger schools. That should help prepare the team for the post-season where they'd like to repeat last year's Regional title.

"Non-conference wise, the schedule is really tough," said Gould. "I'd say the most difficult games for us will be when we play Pleasant Plains who ended up advancing to State last year. Williamsville is on the schedule and they've advanced to the state tournament numerous times. Among larger schools we have Highland, Taylorville, and Jersey on our schedule. Tournament wise, we have Breese Mater Dei, Civic Memorial, and Southeast for the Spring Cup and they are all Class 2A schools.

One goal that Carlinville has is to make their final conference game of the season a meaningful one when they travel to Alton to face perennial South Central Conference power Marquette

Catholic. Last year, the Lady Cavaliers stumbled twice in conference play, but still played the Lady Explorers tough in a 2-0 loss at home on "Senior Night."

"I'd say the best that we will play, especially during the regular season, is Marquette Catholic," Gould said. "They were state runner-up last year and they did that despite dealing with injuries. They return a whole heckuva lot of players and they're all very talented and skilled soccer players."

Carlinville will have a new home this season as the majority of their games will be played at the Carlinville High School athletic field. With new lights, stadium, and a press box along with concession area and rest rooms, it will give the team access to one of the finer facilities in the area.

"It should be really nice," said Gould. "The field is level and it's a smooth surface and it'll play really fast. That should help our girls. We're trying to develop skill and anytime you can move the ball faster, your skill will stand out. We will likely need to play some games at Loveless Park, especially with the tournaments we host. We'll definitely be using Loveless Park and we use it every day in practice."

Following the Spring Cup this weekend, Carlinville will host Staunton March 24 before competing in the Litchfield/Staunton Tournament. Gould says after last season's success, they have set some lofty goals for this year's team.

"The seniors now were freshman my first year with the girls' program," said Gould. "A lot of them have been playing all those four years and contributing in major ways. The same can be said of the juniors. We talked about some goals this year. We're hoping to be in a position to win some tournaments, play for tournament championships and play for a regional championship. We'll see what happens. We've talked about hopefully making our game against Marquette even more and more interesting by being able to win our conference games before that. We thought we'd have an opportunity last year and it just didn't work out. That's a goal we have to make that last game with Marquette really interesting."

There's no doubt that girls' soccer has taken hold at CHS. With 33 girls and a wealth of experience, the Lady Cavaliers should find plenty of success this spring.