

Fall Sports Teams Produce Strong Showing

The fall sports teams at Fox Chapel Area High School always seem to have great success, but this season was particularly momentous. For the second time in three years, the Lady Foxes won the PIAA girls' tennis doubles championship. Nine out of 10 teams advanced to the WPIAL playoffs: girls' tennis doubles, field hockey, girls' and boys' soccer, girls' and boys' golf, boys' cross country, and girls' volleyball. The tennis doubles team and field hockey both won their respective WPIAL championships. Fox Chapel Area High School was represented with two freshmen runners at the PIAA Girls' Cross Country Championship. Boys' soccer was the WPIAL runner-up and advanced to the PIAA quarterfinals. In addition, boys' golf finished the season as the WPIAL runner-up and girls' soccer competed in the WPIAL semifinals for the first time in many years.

Boys' Cross Country Section 4-AAA Champions 7-0 overall

Coach Tom Moul's runners were undefeated in section matches and won their third section championship in four years. An injury to one of their top runners, junior Adam Cook, was a big loss, but the overall team, led by senior top performer Brendan Urso, was still able to post another impressive season.

Cross Country Girls 5-2 overall

As far as the girls, the up-and-coming team showed much improvement this season. Seniors Erin Curry, Arlene Sisson, and Maura Whelan provided great leadership to the younger runners. As a positive sign for the future, two freshmen, Sarena Seeger and Annika Urban, qualified for the PIAA championship. Sarena finished second among all freshmen and Annika was fourth in the same age group. The team will lose six seniors, but Coach Moul is optimistic the girls will continue to improve next season now that some promising freshmen and other underclassmen have gained some experience.

Field Hockey WPIAL Champions Section 2-AAA Champions 12-0 section/20-1 overall (includes WPIAL/PIAA playoffs)

The talent-laden Foxes' Field Hockey Team returned all but two starters this season. Their skillful ability to move and pass the ball down the field and a relentless defense proved unbeatable all season and earned them the section AAA Section-2 champions' title. Their play at the WPIAL AAA championship was just as stellar. The Lady Foxes had a huge victory over the defending champions, North Allegheny, 2-0, and advanced to the PIAA playoffs for the second time in three years. The team had a very emotional loss in the first round of the PIAA tournament, 3-0, and suffered their first loss of the season. Until that point, they were 20-0.

Leading the Lady Foxes on offense were two phenomenal sophomores, Paige Ryan and Abby Pitcairn. Paige broke a school record for most goals scored in a season with 33 goals. Fellow sophomore Abby Pitcairn, who is member of the U17 US National Field Hockey Team, broke her own scoring record from last season with 48 total points — 26 goals and 22 assists. The team will lose nine seniors — five are starters — but plenty of talent remains. The Lady Foxes should remain a formidable force for the foreseeable future.

Voted all-section were senior Maggie McIlroy, junior Meg McCrady, and sophomores Grace

Knepshild, Abby Pitcairn, and Paige Ryan. Meg, Grace, and Abby were named all-WPIAL, and Maggie and Paige were all-WPIAL honorable mention.

Football

0-7 section/1-8 overall

It was a tough year for a young, inexperienced football team and new head coach Tom Loughran and his staff, but they did end the season on a positive note with a victory over Hempfield. Also, this was the first time in three years that the junior varsity team played a full schedule, which will pay off in the years to come. Perhaps the biggest news for football is the new WPIAL configuration, which will go from four conferences (A, AA, AAA, AAAA) to five, beginning in the fall of 2016. When the final categories are announced in January, there is a good chance Fox Chapel Area will be repositioned into a conference with schools that have more like-sized student populations that will help level the playing field. Senior running back Tommy Smith was named to the all-section first team and junior defensive lineman Jack Brown was named all-section second team.

Boys' Golf

Section 4-AAA Champions

12-0 section/16-0 overall

Boys' golf is now more than 50 years old and still going strong! Collectively, the program's teams have now earned more than 500th wins in section play. Over the past four years alone, the players have amassed a 45-1 section record. In fact, since the program's inception in 1962, the various teams have won a total of 26 section championships. Amazingly, there have only been three losing seasons in 53 years, surely making it one of the most elite programs in the country.

This year, the team's experience and depth allowed them to continue that tradition of excellence. The Foxes won a fourth consecutive WPIAL AAA Section-4 crown and, for the second time in three years, advanced to the WPIAL AAA team finals where they finished as the runner-up.

Individually, junior Anthony Cordaro was the Section 4 co-champion and advanced to the WPIAL AAA individual playoffs, along with senior Matt Friday, junior Alex Lawson, and freshman Grant Thiele. Anthony, Alex, and Matt advanced to the PIAA AAA individual western regional finals, where Alex qualified for the PIAA individual championship at Heritage Hills Resort in York, Pennsylvania.

While the year was a good one, Coach Bryan Deal says the goal is to win the WPIAL and PIAA team championships. With a good number of experienced players returning next year, they are more determined than ever to make that happen in 2016.

Girls' Golf

5-3 section/8-4 overall (includes WPIAL team playoffs)

Coach John Broderick's team had a great year punctuated by some superb golf. Their efforts resulted in an 8-4 overall record and a trip to the WPIAL Class AAA team playoffs. Seniors Ciera Miller and Emily Robosson, and Hannah Conroy, a sophomore, qualified for the WPIAL AAA individual championship. Most of the graduating seniors have been on the team for all four years, but Coach Broderick is looking forward to seeing the younger players step into those leadership roles and continue the success established by the departing seniors.

Boys Soccer

Section 3-AAA Champions

11-1-0 section/18-4-1 overall (includes WPIAL/PIAA playoffs)

Months ago, when head coach Erik Ingram addressed his team and their parents, he predicted they'd go to states this year. There was no question they had talent and superb skills. Rather, it was the intangibles that can't necessarily be taught – team chemistry, leadership and soccer IQ – that gave him great confidence in their potential. If that wasn't enough, they had a good amount of versatility, especially from senior leader and all-state player Kota Furuhashi, who, if called upon, could deftly switch from defensive anchor to forward. As it turned out, Coach Ingram was right.

After a near-perfect season of 11-1-0, the team advanced to the WPIAL championship finals for the first time since 2008. The game against Canon-McMillan was grueling and extended into double overtime and a shoot-out. The Foxes finished as runner-up, but still qualified for the PIAA playoffs. In the PIAA Class AAA first-round matchup, the team showed its grit in a 110-minute game against Central York, before winning, 3-2, in another shootout. They advanced to the PIAA quarterfinals. That game against eastern Pennsylvania's Springfield-Delco High School was another onerous, physical competition that ended the Foxes run for the state title by a 2-1 final score. The team finished the season 18-2-1.

Although the team will lose 10 seniors, four of them starters, Coach Ingram isn't worried about forward progress and predicts the team will be great again next year due to the large number of experienced returning players. Voted all-section were seniors Kota Furuhashi and Yarden Solomon, juniors Jung Hong and Michael Snowball, and sophomore Carson Cohen. Senior Elliott Norman was named all-section honorable mention. Kota, Jung, and Michael Snowball were named to the all-WPIAL team, with Kota also selected for the all-state team for the second consecutive year. Coach Ingram achieved a milestone of his own when he was selected the Section-3 Coach of the Year for the eighth time in 10 years.

Girls' Soccer

Section 3-AAA Champions

14-0-0 section/18-4 overall (includes WPIAL AAA playoffs)

The girls had a spectacular season that culminated in their first appearance at the WPIAL AAA semifinals in many years. In a hard-fought match that went scoreless for 110 minutes, the team eventually lost to Upper St. Clair after double overtime and a shootout. Prior to the semifinals, the team had the biggest upset of the entire WPIAL tournament when they beat No. 2 ranked Canon-McMillan in the quarterfinals.

The Lady Foxes also produced some phenomenal results during the regular season: In 14 section games, the defense only allowed two goals - none of which were at home - and had a total of 15 shutouts. The team was in a unique position this season with three goalies, including two freshmen, and was able to use all of them very effectively. On offense, the team scored 114 goals. Although the squad will lose five seniors, four of them starters who were significant contributors, second-year coach Peter Torres says the outlook for next season is positive. Seven starters will return and there are some very good, solid underclassmen ready to step into varsity positions. Five players were voted to the all-section team: seniors Taylor Cohen and Maggie Coulson, and juniors Deena DeBaldo, Dixon Veltri, and Alexis Schwartz. Taylor, Maggie, and Deena also were named all-WPIAL. Although she is only a junior, Deena was selected for the all-state team.

Girls' Tennis

6-1 section/10-6 overall

As a team, the Lady Foxes advanced to the WPIAL team qualifier after a near perfect section record. Senior Laurel Shymansky and sophomore Amanda Nord won the PIAA Class AAA doubles championship by defeating the defending champions from North Allegheny High School, 6-4, 6-2. Laurel, a Duquesne recruit, also won the PIAA doubles championship in 2013 with partner Lacey Cohen. Last year, Laurel and Amanda were the PIAA runner-up. The tandem also won back-to-back WPIAL titles making them the first WPIAL girls' doubles team since 2008 to repeat consecutive titles. Laurel earned three WPIAL titles during her high school career and is the first girls player to earn that many WPIAL championships in more than 20 years. Next season Amanda will move into the Lady Foxes' number one singles' spot.

Girls' Volleyball

10-4 section/12-5 overall (includes WPIAL playoffs)

The team only had to fill one starting position this season. All other top-performers returned and it made a world of difference. A much-improved and more mature team not only showed mental toughness, but the growing pains from last year also paid off with quicker speed and better physical skills. A strong group of seniors provided great leadership that contributed to the team's success and eventual appearance at the WPIAL AAA playoffs. Despite an injury that kept senior starter and D-I Lehigh University recruit Ana Spangenberg out of the playoffs, the team finished the year in good standing. Although Coach Sara Kirsch thought the girls had a good chance for a long playoff run, she was still pleased with what they accomplished, especially during the North Allegheny tournament, where the team played their best volleyball of the season.

The Lady Foxes will lose eight players to graduation —one of their largest departures ever — and they will be missed sorely since all of them contributed to the team. However, there are a number of talented juniors who played big roles this season who can become playmakers and assume leadership roles in 2016. Ana Spangenberg was voted to the all-section first team. Seniors Murphy Patterson, Kayla Slovenec, Sarah Supsura, and junior Desirae Buccigrossi were named all-section second team.