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SPORTS

High School Season Preview: Boys' Soccer

Senior-laden CCHS squad looks to add to team's trophy case.

By **Stacey Kilpatrick** September 6, 2010

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The Concord-Carlisle High School boys' soccer team is ready to start the season.

The teams' four senior captains – Alex Puchrik, Aaron Nickelsberg, Cam McGrory and Seth Bird – who were hand-picked by their teammates, not just their coaches, explained what they're best moments have been as individual players and what they're most looking forward to with their season.

"My biggest moment was last year," said Puchrik, a midfielder. "I stepped up big in the playoffs and just played a ton there. Just getting better as a player was my biggest impact."

Nickelsberg said, "I think it was my sophomore year, the first half of the season I was an outside midfielder, and about midway through I transitioned to be a stopper, and that really made my career, if you will. Now, I start at that position."

"The one big thing for me in this program, the one highlight for me was when we played Danvers in the playoffs (last year)," said McGrory, a goalkeeper. "That was pretty much the only action I saw (as a goalie). I made one really nice full-extension save that really kept us in the game and it was 1-0. Our defense is so solid. I literally see maybe three shots a game, tops."



"My jump from sophomore to junior year was a huge jump in maturity for me," said Bird, a midfielder. "Working hard on and off the field. Seriously the practices are where we win our games. We practice harder than anyone in the state."

Bird said that he's happy all juniors came back for senior year.

"I'm looking forward to a senior-heavy team," Bird said. "We have a lot of chemistry coming back. We were very mixed last year. We had a lot of seniors and a lot of juniors playing and a lot of juniors were getting a lot of playing time and contributing a lot. And this year all seniors are coming back so the start of the season."

"We just completely know each other completely well and it's sort of unbelievable. We're this far at the beginning of the season."

McGrory said that he's looking forward to playing Acton-Boxborough, as the team has heard good things about their competition.

Puchrik said he thinks Lincoln-Sudbury will be their best game.

"Definitely Lincoln-Sudbury," said Puchrik. "Last year we went one and one with them, won the first game 2-0, the second game 1-0, and they're returning their senior captain. It will definitely be a good game."

The Patriots open the season on Sept. 13 at home against Acton-Boxborough.

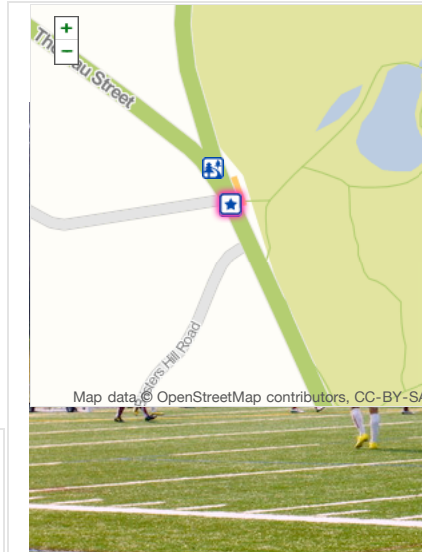
CONCORD-CARLISLE BOYS' SOCCER

Coach: Ray Pavlik (ninth season)

League: Dual County League

Last Year: 17-3-3, Division 2 State Champions

Returning Players: Seth Bird (Senior Captain), Tom Eldridge (Senior), Chris Walker-Jacks



The Concord-Carlisle boys' soccer team returns this fall as the defending Division 2 state champion. Stacey Kilpatrick

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(Junior), Cam McGrory (Senior Captain), Aaron Nickelsberg (Senior Captain), Alex Puchrick (Senior Captain), Will Toczykowski (Senior), Bryan Wholihan (Senior)

Key to Success: Defense. "We have a couple of kids moving into positions where they haven't been before, some of the kids who played supplemental roles now all of a sudden they're going to have to play major roles this year, so can they make that transition?" Pavlik said. "I think our biggest obstacle we face is just having confidence in ourselves as individuals, that we can take people on one-v.-one and be a little bit more aggressive offensively.

"We're young. I think people sometimes tend to be a little tentative to make mistakes so they take the safer option when it's okay to take a risky option. If we're going to get through a defense sometimes someone has to take a chance and if they fail trying to get a goal that's fine, sometimes you're going to succeed sometimes you're going to fail, but if we don't try it, if we don't have the confidence to go then we're not going to put ourselves in the right opportunities."

Game to Watch: "I don't know that I could pick one," said Pavlik "We've got our sort of natural rivals of A-B (Acton-Boxborough) and L-S (Lincoln-Sudbury), but the way the DCL sort of moves, we also have our league rivals, Bedford, Wayland and Weston. All those games are going to be big games."

Coach's Take: "I have high expectations for the guys," coach said. "We have kids coming back, a lot of experience and we have a talented bunch. So we can stay focused and continue to work hard. Always, every year our goal is to get better over the course of the year, to never get complacent with whatever. We always try to reach that next level.

"We know that we can play with anybody if we come ready to play."

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