

Ravenscraft leads boys soccer in new season

Boys soccer looks optimistically into new season with new coach

by Cammy Wray

Matthew Ravenscraft has been named the boys varsity soccer team's new head coach.

This past May, Ravenscraft was offered the job of head coach for the boys varsity soccer team.

"It was incredibly exciting, it's a program with a lot of heritage," said Ravenscraft.

Though he had been coaching boys soccer for 7 years, his decision to accept the job as head coach came as a spur of the moment decision. "My goal was to always better myself as a coach, not necessarily be the head coach, but when the opportunity presented itself, I decided to go for it."

Starting the season off with two non conference games, the team prepped for the Northside College showcase tournament, hosted by New Trier this year.

"This is a prestigious

tournament, we invite seven other teams to play, and they're some of the best teams in the state," said Ravenscraft. "It's a great opportunity early on in the season to see where we stand and what our strengths are."

The team finished third, losing to Saint Charles East, the eventual winners.

Despite their slow start, this past Saturday the team won against Lions Township 1-0, followed by another win against Deerfield 2-0. Ravenscraft believes that the boys are going to play very well this season, and the players agree with him.

"I am expecting us to be very good," said senior Quentin (Q) Benedetto. "We have been working very hard in training and the results are paying off on the field."

The team's record right now is 3-3-1.

Sometimes getting a new coach can throw off the team dynamic, but the boys soccer team has transitioned well according to several players. Michael Zummer, a senior said the only changes Ravenscraft has made to the team have been positive ones.

"He has made us a more serious and focused program. He eliminated

Gatorade and snacks from our locker room, brought in someone to talk about nutrition, and made offseason lifting a real focus for us," said Zummer.

The team also has a great bond. "We have great team chemistry, which is helped by the fact that we have 17 returners who all played together last year."

"The boys varsity team is like a family," said Benedetto.

All the players agree that things are looking up for them this year. "Our first few games were a little rusty, but we are doing a great job of coming together as a team and learning each other's strengths again," said senior Cameron Zwick.

"Some of my closest friendships are with my teammates. I love joking around with them on and off the field, we got each others' backs and I'm happy to play on a team like that," said Zwick.

The most exciting upcoming game for the team is the homecoming game against Evanston. "It's going to be very competitive, we are playing for the hydrant. We are very excited for that game," said Benedetto.

Traditionally, when New Trier plays Evanston, the team exchanges the same fire hydrant, and whichever



Coach Ravenscraft is excited to continue the soccer season | New Trier

team wins gets to keep it and paint it their school's colors.

Zwick agreed with how exciting this game is going to be, counting down the days. "The game is on

Sept. 29th. Our game against them last season was the most exciting game I have ever played in, and we are hungry for revenge."

NTFH stays motivated despite losses

Field hockey not discouraged by three losses in St. Louis tournament

by Arjun Thakkar

New Trier Field Hockey faced formidable opponents and lost all three games 3-1 at the Gateway Field Hockey Classic Tournament in St. Louis, MO.

Defeats served as a learning experience, according to players and coaches.

This year, they faced off against Mary Institute Country Day and Dupont Manual on Sept. 2 and competed with St. Joseph's on Sept. 3.

While losing the three matches was disappointing for the team, Head Coach Stephanie Nykaza wasn't dismayed by the result.

"We're still doing really well considering we're currently 5-1 in our own conference. With this being an interstate tournament, we definitely faced some great teams from other areas, which has helped us identify some areas of growth to work on during practice."

Senior Liza Henderson also maintained a positive outlook after the tourney. "The early season games have been really beneficial to us," said Henderson, "and [the matches] have shined a spotlight on our strengths and weaknesses, which we can now focus on to get better."

Team found that a crucial flaw in their playstyle was the overall defense. Henderson, a defensive player, pinpointed communication and maintaining possession of the ball as the main issues they need to improve upon.

Gwyn Scrine, a junior, also felt that the games helped her recognize some areas that need to be developed, especially in communicating with teammates and focus.

"During practice, we're now really concentrating on making sure we properly connect with each other so we can be more efficient defensive players. We're also just generally focusing a lot more while at practice



Meghan Minturn makes a play in a recent game | New Trier

because the work we put in during practice will pay dividends during the games," Scrine said.

Nykaza emphasized the room for improvement in the team's defensive strength when she explained that field hockey is a low-scoring game.

"In other sports, like lacrosse and basketball, which are high-scoring games, coming back from a point deficit isn't as difficult of a task as it is in Field Hockey. I'm a firm believer in the idea that offense wins games, but defense wins championships. Unless we can keep the ball out of our side of the field, the opposition will continue to score on us," said Nykaza.

Nykaza added, "[The girls] are athletic, they understand the system of play, and once they bolster the defense, they'll really be able to improve. Our seniors have without a doubt taken on leadership roles on the team to help them get better, and the younger athletes certainly look up to them as role models."

Despite the losses in Missouri, Scrine feels that the team bonds

better after each and every game. "During the 2nd match, everyone on the sidelines got really excited, and even though we weren't playing, we were cheering our teammates on loudly. Regardless of whether or not we win, we always have a fun experience cheering each other on."

The varsity team has been going to this tournament for over 10 years, where they play with a wide range of teams from different states.

"We've only ever really won at this tourney twice, so going there was less about winning and more to help us improve. By no means does the result of these matches project how the rest of our season goes," Nykaza added.

New Trier will be competing at a tournament of a similar nature in Oak Park starting on Sep. 23, where Nykaza hopes that the team uses the lessons they learned from in St. Louis.

"The coaching staff has been guiding them on how to get better, but ultimately, they're in control of what happens this year."

Four questions with Augie Fontanetta

We sat down with Fontanetta regarding his new job and New Trier athletics

What are the main differences you see between New Trier athletics and athletics at other districts?

One of the significant differences is the array of sports that we offer. New Trier is unique to be offering a crew team. It's also unique to have a fencing team under the umbrella of athletics. In the outdoor facilities, we have three synthetic turfs. That's really unique for a high school. Most high schools have their stadiums with synthetic turf, but not any auxiliary fields. The other significant difference is the amount of individual attention we can give the athletes with the coaching staff that we're allowed to have in place.

What's your perspective on the athletic code of conduct as it is?

We did change it a little bit. We altered the consequences, so the first offense is no longer up to 50%, it's up to 25%. The second [offense] went from a calendar year to up to 50%. I think that's aligned with the philosophy of the school-- we realize that the kids and students will make mistakes. Although we want to provide a consequence, we don't want to make it an end all, be all. Really, what we want a student athlete to do is learn from the consequence, move one, and stay engaged in athletics. That's the most important thing, that we don't want to give somebody a consequence because they made a poor decision and then never see them again in athletics. We want the consequence to be appropriate. We don't want the consequence to be overwhelming, and we don't want it to drive the student athlete out of an athletic event. I think it's consistent to say that, not just with athletics, but with everything. That's the

extracurricular code, and I think it's a great change. I feel that it's aligned with our school philosophy and our mission statement.

How do you decide the budgeting of New Trier athletics?

This is my first year coming into the budgeting process, but typically, at the end of each season, you evaluate the needs of a program, and you base it on the needs. Each sport doesn't have a particular set of money. We have one budget for the athletic department. I work with the coaches to determine what your needs are versus your wants. You may come to me for uniforms this year, and I may [say], "we may not have enough money this year, how about next year?" We work together, really, and it's on a needs basis. Also, I like to think of myself as somebody who's proactive. I try to get the coaches to think about things that they want to see in the future and prove in their program.

Do you have any advice for New Trier students?

Get involved. Be active. Hopefully, everybody can walk out of here having an experience as a New Trier athlete. My philosophy is that I want everybody on the team to have a positive experience. It doesn't matter to me if you're the best or somebody who sits on the bench. I think getting involved and being part of a team and working and learning life lessons is really important.