

Squad goals

Girls soccer team chases after first state championship since 1998

Garrett Elliott • Sports Editor

For any athletic program that has made the playoffs every year since 1991 and won an outright district championship 22 out of the past 25 years, expectations are high.

That's the case for the Lady Warrior Soccer Team that intends to win the program's third state championship, but the first one since 1998.

This year starts a new era for the Lady Warriors. After 33 years and leading Martin to two state championships, former head coach Ruth Knight retired.

Stepping in her place is the coach who has assisted her for the past 19 years, coach Sabrina Harrington.

"She was a really successful coach," Harrington said. "You spend 33 years in one place and win more than 500 games, that just doesn't happen with many people. I don't know if I'd call it pressure. Definitely big shoes to fill. I've worked under her for 19 years. There are a lot of the things we're not going to change, but there are some things just my personal style that we'll do a little different both in workout and in game play. There's pressure, just not added, only because I feel like I've been here for so long."

Harrington said she knows that this year's team has what it takes to continue the success the program has had.

"They want it," Harrington

said. "They'll do anything I ask—not necessarily happily—but they'll do anything I ask because they know we're all working toward something. They're really good at being goal oriented and understanding that it takes effort to achieve great things."

No senior wants to lose the head coach they've had for their final season, but the players have embraced the change.

"It's been huge," senior captain Holly Hasten said. "Coach Harrington has influenced us a lot. She makes us run all the time, she's improved our team in many qualities, and importantly made us more of a family."

The season's expectations are as high as ever as the team has experience with returning 13 players from last year's team that lost in the fourth round to a tough Coppell team who went on to win state. The Warriors will use that experience and chemistry to their advantage.

"We're a really tight-knit team," junior captain Haley Riley said. "We have really close relationships with each other."

The Warriors are (9-3-1) overall and (4-0) in district (as of Feb. 8) with upcoming home games against rivals Arlington on Feb. 12 at 5 p.m. and against Lamar on Feb. 19 at 7:30 p.m.

"Arlington or Lamar are our biggest competition in



The Lady Warriors celebrate after a goal in the second half during the 3-2 district win over Lamar at Cravens Field Jan. 6. They will face off against Lamar again at 7:30 on Feb. 19 at home. **Photo by Jean Floyd**

District because we know a lot of the girls on those teams," Riley said. "So it's always a pretty dramatic game."

When it comes to playoffs, the Warriors travel out west to play teams from the Odessa and Midland area for round one and the Amarillo and Lubbock area for the second round and play another West Texas team for the third round before heading back to the metroplex for the fourth round, where the Warriors run into their toughest competition.

"Teams up north like Southlake Carroll are always good," Riley said. "Coppell is always good competition too."

The Warriors and Harrington said they know that in order to take the next step and win state, they need to focus on working on some of their fundamentals.

"We've just got to commit ourselves to our fitness because that is something we can control," Harrington said. "The step we have to take is taking care of the things we can control. We can't control how fast the other team is, how many players they have, how tall they are, how far they can kick the ball. We can't control that, but we can control our fitness and our attitude, so we're working real hard on just taking care of the things we can control."

The Warriors also know that the mental aspects of the game and mental toughness plays a key role in how the team performs under pressure.

"We need to have a positive attitude, sometimes during the season or during playoffs some of the girls are kind of negative or lazy," Riley said. "Our attitude is very important."

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