



SIOBHAN McGOVERN WITH 10 GOALS, HART 8 GOALS, MADSEN 7 ASSISTS LED OFFENSE

Cougar Girls Battled Youth, Challenging Soccer Schedule

By ALEX LOWE

Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Nobody expected things to be easy. Truer words could not be spoken when considering the task that faced the Cranford High School girls soccer team in 2014. Yet in the wake of their season-ending 4-2 loss at West Morris in the quarterfinal round of the NJSIAA North Jersey, Section 2, Group 3 playoffs, Head Coach Jen Michewicz had a chance to reflect on her team's performance this year and there were plenty of things to be happy about.

"At the start of the season we knew this would be a rebuilding year," she said. "We graduated 10 seniors from the program last year, with over half of them being four-year varsity players. We were also in the toughest league division in Union County. We saw the top-4 teams in our county eight times. Our goal was to take one game at a time and hope to peak at the correct time. Towards the end of the season we started to peak and play the best soccer we had played all season."

The Cougars finished the year with a 9-11-1 mark. They qualified for the state playoffs despite playing the likes of teams like Union three times and Westfield and undefeated power Scotch Plains-Fanwood twice. In fact, one of the high points of the Cranford season came right before the start of the state tournament when they scored a 2-1 upset win at Union. They qualified for the State Tournament as the Number 7 seed in the sectional bracket. They defeated 10th seeded South Plainfield, 5-0, in the opening round before falling to second-seeded West Morris.

"Union finished second in the

county," said Michewicz. "The 2-1 win toward the end of the season showed us that we are able to compete with all of the top teams in the county. Unfortunately the win came a game late in the regular season match ups not in the county tournament."

Cranford had several strong performers during the course of the season with midfielder Maddie Hart and forward Siobhan McGovern drawing praise from their coach. Hart and McGovern, both juniors, earned spots on the First Team All-Conference and All-County squads.

"Maddie Hart is an extremely talented player in the midfield," said Michewicz. "She contributes both defensively and offensively and helps hold the team together.

Her tactical vision of the field is impressive. She finished the season with eight goals. She is a leader for the team on the field and players look for her to generate the attack. Siobhan McGovern is a target forward and our go-to player on offense. She combines well with players around her to create scoring opportunities."

McGovern led the team with 10 goals on the season. Teammate Julia Madsen paced the team with seven assists followed by Hart with six assists and McGovern with four.

On defense, goaltender Dana Accolla recorded 50 saves for the year and had a standout 10-save performance against Westfield during a 1-0 loss on

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

BALLYHOO

See & Subscribe at
goleader.com/ballyhoo

Submit commentary and items for publishing.
Email to ballyhoo@goleader.com

Google l'ennemi du journaliste