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## Girls soccer preview: Can Reservoir defend its county title?

*Challengers are lining up*

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Posted 8/31/10

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*(Enlarge)* Wilde Lake junior Gillian Sawyer is the top returning goal scorer in the county. She scored 14 goals her sophomore year. (Staff photo by Matt Roth)

compared to 23 a year ago. "If we stay healthy, we can be very, very good."

The Gators return eight players with starting experience, led by senior all-county first-team midfielder Katlyn Axenfeld (four goals, five assists).

Sullivan believes there was more pressure on last year's team because of expectations. The Gators have the confidence of a defending champion and the resolve to do whatever is necessary to repeat.

"I think they understand how hard and difficult a task it is, and are up for the challenge," said Sullivan, whose team finished 9-2-0 in the county and 15-4-1 overall.

Four teams — Glenelg, River Hill, Centennial and Marriotts Ridge — also finished last year's county schedule with two losses. Of that group, the Marriotts Ridge could be the strongest this season.

"For the first time in the history of our program, we have depth," said Marriotts Ridge coach Robin Grey, who begins her fifth varsity season. "Returning 16 players, eight of which are starters, should work to our advantage."

Heading the list of returning starters are senior midfielder Alexandra Price, senior forward Katie Kanner and junior defender Maria Hochuli.

"We hope to build on our success from last season," Grey said "Given the number of kids we have coming back, this definitely looks to be a promising year for us. The key will be staying grounded and making sure we take things one game at a time."

River Hill, an eight-time county champion, always is a threat. The Hawks had a chance to tie Reservoir for the county title but played a scoreless tie in the regular-season finale and finished tied for second with Glenelg.

"Our team is very young, but my expectation and those of the players are no different," said River Hill coach

A year after winning its first county title, Reservoir's girls soccer team no longer wonders if it has what it takes to earn a championship.

"Our biggest strength this season is experience. We have 10 seniors on the team, all of which were there for the run that we made last year," said Reservoir coach Josh Sullivan, whose squad lost a one-goal decision to Tuscarora in the Class 3A state final. "They have all tasted what it's like to be there, and want to get back."

And Sullivan likes his team's chances.

"The key to our season will be staying healthy," said Sullivan, who is carrying 17 players, including two goalies, this season

Brian Song. "We expect to challenge for the county title as well as have a deep run into the state playoffs."

Glenelg graduated 10 players, including three of the top five county point leaders -- Player of the Year Kristen Schmidbauer (16 goals, seven assists) Katie Chase (15, 3) and Alex Collier (9, 8).

"We should still be fairly strong defensively," said Glenelg coach Dean Sheridan. "How the midfield and attack adjust will be important."

Centennial graduated seven starters, but first-year coach Steve Baxter expects the Eagles "to be just as competitive as last year even though we are replacing so many starters."

And if you're looking for a possible sleeper team, look no further than Atholton, which finished 6-5-0 in the county last season.

"This is the most talented team we have had in years," said Atholton coach Stephanie Stoutenborough, who begins her ninth season. "With our talent, we should be one of the top teams."

Wilde Lake's Gillian Sawyer is the top returning point-producer in the county. She had 14 goals and six assists a year ago.

#### Around the county

Here's how the team's look as the season begins. Sept. 3 is the season opener.

#### Atholton

**2009 record:** 6-5 county, 7-6 overall

**Top players:** Seniors Bridgette Snyder (F), Meghan Johnson (D); Juniors Amy Weinberg (GK), Desiree Bodziony (F/M); sophomores Katrina Macadoff (F) and Maddie Boccio (M).

**What you need to know:** "We are going to be competitive," said coach Stephanie Stoutenborough. "We have a lot of girls that can score and our defense is solid."

Macadoff had 11 goals and four assists last season. "One touch and she blows by the defender," Stoutenborough said. "She has a great shot and amazing ball skills." Bodziony (eight goals, two assists) has a powerful shot and gets involved in every play.

Snyder is fast and moves well off the ball, Johnson is a solid defender, Weinberg one of the top returning goalies in the county and Broccio reads the field well and makes amazing passes.

#### Centennial

**2009 record:** 7-2-2, 9-4-3

**Top players:** Seniors Taylor Bourg (F) and Erica Albornoz (GK); Juniors Jordan Coburn (D), Caroline Baker (D), Katie Donegan (GK) and Nicki Mize (F).

**What you need to know:** "After graduating seven full-time and seven part-time starters, many people expect this to be a rebuilding year," said first-year coach Steve Baxter, who coached the girls varsity soccer team last year at Glen Burnie. "However, this is a talented and coachable group and I am excited to get the season started to see what we can accomplish."

Baxter, whose squad returns four full-time starters, said he expects the Eagles "to be just as competitive as last season. Our biggest strength will likely be our central defense and goalkeeping. We have two starting caliber goalkeepers (Albornoz and Katie Donegan). This is a very balanced team with good starting depth."

Mize, who is playing after recovering from knee surgery, and Bourg each scored eight goals last fall. Centennial has three freshmen — Carolyn Eichorn, Mary Anderson and Ruthie Lucas — who will see significant playing time.

#### Glenelg

**2009 record:** 8-2-1, 13-4-1

**Top players:** Seniors Elizabeth Ebling (D), Catherine Cottrell (D), Rachel McCarriher (F) and Jamie Melcher (M); Juniors Brooke Carey (GK), Danielle Burris (M) and Megan Pawtowski (D).

**What you need to know:** "We have kept a very small, but dedicated, intelligent and talented squad," said coach Dean Sheridan, whose team lost in the Class 2A state semifinals last year after a run of three state titles. "That should allow us to move with the game, maintain shape and flow, and take advantage of transition opportunities."

Ebling, Cottrell, McCarriher and Carey are starting their third varsity season, and Burris is a two-year starter and the team's leading returning point scorer (four goals, eight assists). Carey, who helped Glenelg to a state title two years ago in a championship game shootout, is one of the county's top returning goalies.

"I expect to be competitive, and we will continue to play the best teams available [outside the county] and see how we stack up," said Sheridan. "That has always allowed us to go into the playoffs knowing we have persevered against quality teams and are prepared to face them in those final weeks."

## Hammond

**2009 record:** 1-9-1, 2-11-1

**Top players:** Seniors Angela Humpert (M), Sam Gailey (M), Lauren DeGroat (M), Ashley Cole (M) and Amy Simpson (F).

**What you need to know:** "We are better organized and have a better understanding of how to play together," said second-year coach Nathan Rauscher.

Hammond returns six starters, and Rauscher added that "we have many players who've come into the season ready to perform at the varsity level."

Hammond defeated Long Reach and tied Oakland Mills last season, but it also posted one-goal losses against top-tier teams River Hill and Centennial.

"We're hoping to win the tight games by staying well organized and playing as a unit, and taking our chances," Rauscher said.

## Howard

**2009 record:** 5-5-1, 9-6-1

**Top players:** Seniors Julia Cocozza (M) and Allison Green (F).

**What you need to know:** "We do not have as many standout players as we did last year, but we do have more all-around solid players that I think will benefit us," said coach Michelle Rugiel, who begins her fifth season at Howard with a new last name after getting married. "I expect that we will be competitive in all our games."

Cocozza is a four-year varsity starter. She's extremely skilled and unselfish. Green's tenacity resulted in 10 goals and three assists last fall.

Howard returns nine seniors. "These girls have been playing together for a long time now and are very comfortable playing together," said Rugiel.

## Long Reach

**2009 record:** 1-10-0, 3-12-0

**Top players:** Seniors Jessica Sachs (M) and Katie Haarer (M); sophomore Kristen Fawole. (F)

**What you need to know:** "The team has a good balance of varsity experience, senior leadership and young talent," said first-year coach Erik Sandersen, who has eight returning starters. "Having shown a willingness to work extremely hard in practice and great team chemistry, there is an emerging belief among the players that this year's team will be a winner."

Long Reach won just one county game last year, but Sandersen expects more victories this season. "This year's team will not be satisfied to merely be competitive in many of the games. The team has the talent and depth to win games that may have previously slipped away."

Sachs, a four-year starter, will be anchor the team. Haarer, also a four-year starter, is a solid all-around player. Fawole, a second-team all-county pick last year, led the Lighting with 11 goals.

## Marriotts Ridge

**2009 record:** 5-2-4, 9-4-4)

**Top players:** Seniors Alexandra Price (M), Katie Kanner (F), Maxine Brewer (F), Kara Schaffer (M) and Kristene Mumby (GK); junior Maria Hochuli (D); sophomore Morgan Crable (M).

**What you should know:** Twelve of the 21 players are seniors. One of them is Mumby, a transfer from Pallotti who will take over in goal.

"We hope to build on our success from last season," said coach Robin Grey, whose team returns eight starters. "Given the number of kids we have coming back, this definitely looks to be a promising year for us. The key will be staying grounded and making sure we take things one game at a time.

"My concern is always injuries. We struggled a lot with this last year. If we stay healthy, we have the potential to really make our presence know this year."

Price provides strength and stability to the midfield. With eight goals, Kanner was the team's leading scorer last fall. Hochuli runs down and contains opponents with easy.

## Mt. Hebron

**2009 record:** 4-7-0, 6-10-0

**Top players:** Seniors Clare Chatham (D), Morgan O'Donnell (M) and Kelly Snyder (D); juniors Claire Nickles (D) and Erica Staedeli (M); sophomore Susie Halper (F).

**What you need to know:** "It's a very young team so hopefully we learn fast and improve even faster," said coach Tim Deppen, whose squad returns six starters.

The Vikings' strength is its defense, led by Chatham, a four-year starter. "She the most aggressive player on the team and will not be beat off the ball," Deppen said. "And if she is, she has the ball back in her possession within five seconds."

#### Oakland Mills

**2009 record:** 0-10-1, 2-11-1

**Top player:** Senior Anna Kiely (D).

**What you need to know:** The Scorpions scored two goals against county opponents last year and were shut out nine times.

"Our expectation is that we're going to improve and score some goals," said coach Susan Rosner. "We're going to be more competitive and give teams more of a challenge and force them to keep their starters on the field longer. We want to make (opponents) work harder for what they get."

Kiely, a stopper/sweeper, is a four-year varsity player and a returning second-team all-county selection. Joining her on defense will be sophomores Marlee Slaughter and Alicia Wooten, both starters last season. Two more sophomores — Melissa Goodman (M) and Kathlene Striano (D) — have moved up from the junior varsity and are expected to contribute.

"Last year we were at rock bottom," Rosner said. "This year we are going to pile those rocks up and start climbing back up."

#### Reservoir

**2009 record:** 9-2-0, 15-4-1

**Top players:** Seniors Katlyn Axenfeld (M), Megan Armstrong (M), Katherine Tuttle (M) and Breanna Marsh (D); juniors Michelle Viegas (M) and Megan Fowler (GK); sophomore Amanda Jackson (F); freshman Delany Reiff (D).

**What you need to know:** Starting his third season, coach Josh Sullivan has seen something in this year's team that he's never experience before.

"This team is much more driven," Sullivan said. "They get it. They work hard and understand what it takes."

After graduating their goalie, the Gators will start Fowler, who was called up from junior varsity late last season to play defense. During her spring club season, Fowler started playing goalie and it has become her new position.

Reservoir, the defending county champions and Class 3A state finalist, will start its season Sept. 3 playing in the Tuscarora Tournament. Its opponent will be Tuscarora, the Frederick County school that beat Reservoir, 3-2, in the state championship.

"We all want to get back, and believe we can," said Sullivan. "So the belief is there, but again, soccer can be, and is, a humbling game. We feel confident in ourselves that we will be successful, but anything can happen, especially if you let it."

Axenfeld, Armstrong and Marsh are four-year starters, and Tuttle is a three-year starter. Viegas is a returning second-team all-county selection.

#### River Hill

2009 record: 8-2-1, 12-4-1)

**Top players:** Seniors Anna Theisen (F), Kellie Song (M), Stephanie Norman (D), Taylor Nowaski (D) and Tope Olejubi (F); juniors Katie Marlatt and Liz Bamber (M); freshmen Sheridan Street (F/M), Callahan Allen (D) and Amaya Phillips (D).

**What you need to know:** "The strength of the team will come from the seniors," said coach Brian Song, whose team returns six starters. "Their leadership will be able to combine the newcomers with the returning players to have a successful season."

Theisen, a first-team all-county selection, led the Hawks last season with eight goals and three assists. She, Song and Norman are four-year varsity players that "will lead the team by example," Brian Song said. "The have great heart and understand their role."

Olejubi was the team's second leading scorer last season with five goals.

#### Wilde Lake

**2009 record:** 6-4-1, 8-5-1

**Top players:** Senior Kiana Richards (D); junior Gillian Sawyer (F); sophomore Maria Pascale (M).

What you need to know: "We lost five starters from last year to graduation, including the entire starting defense and keeper," said coach Phil Webster. "Our strength will be in the midfield, albeit with several young players."

Webster called Richards "a strong, but quiet senior leader. She is very athletic, has great skills and will run all day."

Sawyer was the second-leading point scorer in the county last season with 14 goals and six assists and has great offensive instincts.

"She will attack from any part of the field, has great runs off the ball, can turn and shoot and loves to take the ball at defenders," Webster said.

Pascale is an emerging young player and capable of shooting with either foot.

Don't be surprised if Wilde Lake starts three freshmen.

"We will be young and we will get better as the year progresses," Webster predicted.

### Chapelgate

**2009 record:** 3-6 IAAM B Conference, 5-8

**Top players:** Senior Laura Lovaas (F); junior Kristin Thomas (M); sophomore Jen Yahiro (M); freshman Lydia Frierson (F).

**What you need to know:** Chapelgate has a new coach — Christen Gjeldum — and has moved down to the Interscholastic Athletic Association of Maryland C Conference.

"I think (moving down) makes us want to prove ourselves even more to our opponents," said Gjeldum, who was a JUCO All-American/All Region soccer player in 2003 at Howard Community College. "There is a good core of talent to work with."

Chapelgate graduated only three players from last year's squad.

Lovaas is a four-year varsity player and Thomas is starting her third varsity season.

### Glenelg Country School

**2009 record:** 0-9 IAAM C Conference, 0-13)

**Top players:** Senior Jessica Ortega (D); juniors Olivia Clark (D) and Christina Horne (F); freshmen Ninah Dawson (M), Katie Kunkle (M/D) and Ashley Mink (M).

**What you need to know:** "While our midfielders are young, they are coming with strong club team experience and will provide the necessary offensive support and threat that we have been missing in the past few years," said coach Christy Mink. "They also will be providing a solid link from the back up to the front, which will make us a much more dangerous team to contend with this season."

Ortega, a four-year starter, and Clark, a three-year starter, provide leadership, according to Mink. She added that Horne, also a three-year starter, is quick with a strong shot.

"I think many will be surprised to see the level of talent that we have acquired and those new players, combined with our seven returning starters, will undoubtedly make an impact on the field," Mink said.

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