



2009 High School Soccer Preview: The 5-Minute Guide

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GIRLS PREVIEW 11 Players to Watch

Jen Spicer, Shelton -- Senior forward was one of the most dangerous players in the SCC, notching 17 goals and 10 assists last season.

Taylor Healy, Luralton Hall -- Senior defender leads a veteran Crusaders backline and is drawing college interest.

Jessica Schloth, St. Joseph -- The Cadets' all-everything midfielder is committed to Yale and could be primed to improve on last year's 10-goal, 12-assist output and a repeat as state player of the year.

Sarah Frassetto, St. Joseph -- Senior midfielder has made a verbal commitment to Fairfield after scoring 13 goals during last year's run to the Class M championship.

Kara Kapell, Trumbull -- Senior midfielder/forward is one of the few holdovers for the Eagles and will need to help replace the loss of two-time state tournament MVP Kristen Forster (15 goals, 13 assists).

Chrissy Lozier, Fairfield Ludlowe -- Senior attacking midfielder is one of the more explosive offensive players in the state with a scoring range

from over 20 yards out. She scored 11 goals last season and has verbally committed to Dartmouth.

Jackie McSally, Masuk -- Four-year starter is a two-time all-New England pick. Scored 10 goals with five assists last season and is committed to Wake Forest.

Meg Sanborn, Weston -- Senior defender is coming off a first-team all-SWC season. Her ability to read the game and get into the attack has attracted some Division I interest.

Jaclyn Katz, Staples -- Junior forward could approach the 15-20 goal range as the Wreckers aim to improve on last season's 12-4-1 mark.

Nicole Pacapelli, West Haven -- Midfielder is one of nine seniors back for the Blue Devils, who finished 12-3-3 last year. She scored eight goals -- including three game winners.

Fiorella Johnson, Barlow -- Junior is the Falcons' top returning scorer with 14 goals.

5 Teams to Watch

St. Joseph -- It would be extremely difficult for the Cadets to improve on their 2008 season, where they finished 21-1-1, defended their Class M crown and won the FCIAC for the first time. However, don't bet on coach Jack Nogueira allowing St. Joseph to rest on its lofty laurels.

Barlow -- The Falcons lost 1-0 in nip-and-tuck fashion to Wilton in the Class L championship game and return 10 starters from that team aside from standout keeper Kara Davis.

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Lauralton Hall -- In his second year at the helm, coach Rick Koczak is bullish on his Crusaders, mainly due to their veteran defense and young, exciting offensive players, including sophomore Shelby Halasz. Koczak thinks his team could be the fastest and most technical in the SWC.

Shelton -- The Gaels finished 13-4-1 last season and with players like Spicer, Alison Farrell and Chloe Ashcroft they're looking to get over the hump in the SCC Housatonic Division.

Weston -- The Trojans return 11 seniors and the core of a group that finished 6-8-3 last season. Players like Sanborn, Callie Bowie and Macky Young have coach Joanna Hallac thinking of the SWC playoffs.

5 Games to Watch

St. Joseph at Trumbull, Sept. 17, 7 p.m. -- Early season crosstown encounter is always among the best matchups in the FCIAC.

Shelton at Amity, Sept. 25, 3:45 p.m. -- Important early game for two teams trying to get past Cheshire in the SCC Housatonic.

Barlow at Masuk, Oct. 8, 7 p.m. -- Possibly an advance preview of the SWC championship game.

Fairfield Ludlowe at Fairfield Warde, Oct. 15, 4 p.m. -- Could be a key game for two teams fighting to make the FCIAC playoffs.

Darien at St. Joseph, Oct. 21, 4 p.m. -- A rematch of last year's FCIAC title game won by St. Joseph, where the Cadets avenged their only loss of 2008.

5 Storylines to Watch

Can the FCIAC continue to dominate? -- For the second straight season the FCIAC posted three of the four CIAC state champions with Trumbull (LL), Wilton (L) and St. Joseph (M). Perhaps the best testament to the strength of the league is Wilton won its title as the 17th seed with an 8-5-3 record. Will lightning strike for a third consecutive season?

New-look Trumbull -- The Eagles have established their second Class LL dynasty, winning three consecutive state titles. This season Trumbull should have a different feel with only three starters back (Kapell, Marissa Pearson and Meg Loughman), but few -- if anyone -- will write off Dan Uhrlass' team's chances. The Eagles have already been dealt a setback, losing probable starting keeper Jen Russo to an ACL injury, but Uhrlass is hopeful she could return by November.

Masuk's run in the SWC -- The players and faces change, but coach Eleanor Brainard's Panthers remain the most consistent team inside the SWC. Though leading scorer Kayla Howden is gone, players like McSally, Marissa Maiolo and Amanda Snajder keep the Panthers as the league's team to beat.

New-look Newtown -- Last year's SWC runner-up graduated roughly 85 percent of its scoring, including standouts Tania Domingos and Kasey Schulz. Coach Marc Kenny is optimistic that seniors like Kristin Tanner, Taylor Smith and Aly Modzlewski can keep the Nighthawks in the upper half of the league.

Is parity here? -- More than one coach ahead of the new season mentioned how there could be a possible leveling off of talent around the region,

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with the league and state races more wide-open than ever. Time will tell if this proves to be the case.

Around the Region

After a string of recent success, Amity coach Owen Quigley is trying to rebuild on the fly, incorporating up to seven freshmen around a veteran core, which includes Kelly Turner, Rachel Amato, Katelyn Cimino and Leslie Barrett. "If we gel we can be pretty good," Quigley said. ... With seniors like Sara Duffy, Fairfield Warde is aiming to play itself among the top eight in the FCIAC. ... ND-Fairfield brings back four starters trying to build off last year's 1-15 mark. ... Law has a new coach (Mike Hoggatt) with hopes of improving on last year's 2-14 record. ... Stratford coach Erin Mucha sees some steady improvement with the Red Devils who went 1-14-1 last year. ... Central has a new coach (Rick Coutinho) and thinks four-year starters Alyssa Zargos, Alexandra Pires and Reni Sores can help the Hilltoppers compete with the lower half of the FCIAC. ... Christian Heritage has a new coach (Mike O'Leary) and will be anchored by keeper Abby Campbell.

BOYS PREVIEW 11 Players to Watch

Stephen Sasso, Amity -- The SCC championship game's MVP posted a school-best 16 shutouts last season with only five goals allowed.

Kevin Howard, Amity -- Set a school record for points last season as a junior with 27 goals and 12 assists.

Reco McLaren, Central -- Burst onto the scene with 14 goals and 11 assists as a junior and should keep the Hilltoppers competitive in the FCIAC.

Greg Padilla, ND-West Haven -- Senior defensive midfielder will be counted on to help replace Will Daniels. Coach Rudy Raffone likes the 6-foot-2 Padilla's ability to use his big frame to finish on set pieces.

Mike Matera, Trumbull -- Was an all-state selection as a junior, chipping in with seven goals and 11 assists from the midfield.

Mike Saia, Masuk -- Finished as one of the Panthers' top scorers last season and coach Brian Humpal is hopeful that Saia can refine his game so he's more of a threat with the ball at his feet.

Andres Torres, Norwalk -- Dynamic forward scored 16 goals as a sophomore and makes Norwalk a darkhorse in the FCIAC.

Jose Campos, Platt Tech -- Notched 20 assists last year, so it'll be interesting to see if the Panthers' high-flying attack stays airborne with the graduation of star scorer Joe Bacciolo (37 goals). Platt Tech does still have Bruno Chima, who netted 14 goals from the midfield last year.

Jehu Wilson, Christian Heritage -- High-scoring senior forward will try to push the Kingsmen to the top of the Hudson Valley Athletic League.

Matt Freedman, Fairfield Warde -- Senior keeper has been a four-year starter for the Mustangs and will be key if Warde tries to build off its upset of Trumbull in last year's FCIAC playoffs after graduating eight seniors.

Alan Reiter, Staples -- Though Wreckers remain the consummate team, the all-state midfielder is an

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important cog in a very deep squad.

Five Teams to Watch

Amity -- The defending SCC champ returns almost its entire team, which finished 17-3. Coach Mike Marchitto knows the expectations are high with the Spartans as they look to advance past the Class LL second round. "Pressure is something we put on ourselves," he said.

Fairfield Prep -- As longtime coach Bruce Jaffe says, "You never have a bad team at Prep." He likes the mix this season with veterans Kevin Burt, Ethan Enriquez and Parker Delmolino leading the charge.

Trumbull -- With 19 seniors on the roster, coach Sebby Gangemi is expecting big things -- as usual -- for the Eagles, who aim to improve on last year's finish which saw them bounced in the first round of the FCIAC and Class LL playoffs. "We've got the horses and we'll run them," Gangemi said.

Staples -- The defending FCIAC champ always plays with a target on its back, but will also play the season with heavy hearts due to the sudden death of former standout Preston Hirten over the summer during college practice. A senior core of Reiter, Jack Hennessey and Mike White should keep Staples near the top of the challenging FCIAC.

Barlow -- Paul Winstanley, the coach of the defending SWC champion, sums it up thusly about the expectations at Barlow: "Success for some is a choice, for us it's an expectation." The Falcons bring back a veteran defense with the biggest question mark trying to replace four-year standout and Connecticut Post MVP Cody Hickok in goal.

Five Games to Watch

ND-West Haven at Fairfield Prep, Sept. 25, 3:45 p.m. -- Always a highly-contested affair in the very competitive SCC Quinnipiac Division.

Staples at Norwalk, Oct. 6, 7 p.m. -- A rematch of the FCIAC semifinals; could be a good early season barometer for both teams.

Barlow at Newtown, Oct. 15, 7 p.m. -- A possible SWC championship game preview?

Naugatuck at Seymour, Oct. 15, 6 p.m. -- One of the NVL's better rivalries resumes but the two teams only play once during the regular season.

Ridgefield at Trumbull, Oct. 28, 7 p.m. -- Late season affair might have an important role in FCIAC playoff seeding.

Five Storylines to Watch

Can Newtown return to form? -- The perennially strong Nighthawks lost in both the first round of the SWC and Class LL tournaments last season. With senior midfielders Evan Kennedy and Jeff DiNicola, Newtown is aiming to get back on top of the SWC where it had played in seven of the last nine league championship games. Brookfield, Barlow and New Milford might have something to say about that.

Wide-open FCIAC -- It's hard to find a league tougher at the top than the FCIAC. Staples, Trumbull, Greenwich, Ridgefield, Wilton, Danbury and Norwalk will all make their claims to the top of the division, meaning a couple strong sides might not even qualify for the league tournament.

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Foran eyes breakthrough -- The Lions have gone through some lean seasons, posting a combined 0-31-1 mark the last two years. Coach Rick DiStefano is hopeful the last two seasons the players that look their lumps as freshmen and sophomores will yield results as juniors and seniors. Players like Chris Rudnick, Semir Redazaeagit, Zack Phelan and Chris Gilmore have DiStefano saying, "This is the year we want to make good things happen."

New-look Seymour -- Over the last two seasons the Wildcats have been one of the highest scoring teams in the area. With players like David Ponce and Seth Ragaini (31 combined goals) gone, it'll be up to a new breed of players such as sophomore Jeremy Kershaw to pick up the slack if Seymour wants to stay near the top of the NVL.

Hello, goodbye -- The boys soccer landscape will have a couple different looks this season as Oxford plays its first varsity season in the SWC and Derby shifts from the SCC to the NVL.

Around the Region

Bunnell brings back seven starters, including Edgar Martinez and Zach Zurita, and will play all its home games at night on the school's new turf field. ... St. Joseph should be young with seniors Brendan Nugent and Matt Danaher hoping to lead a way into the state tournament. ... Shelton has a good core returning, including Joe Pires and Alex Howland. ... Ansonia is in the midst of a rebuilding process, losing nine starters but coach Ryan Santo likes what he sees in sophomore Stanley Jean-Baptiste. ... Bullard-Havens is another team in rebuilding mode after graduating 12 seniors. Seniors Alex Majano and Jonathan Contreras will be counted on to shoulder the load. ... Rebuilding is also the buzzword around Law, where seniors Lonnie

Quarford, Bryce DelGrande and Jason Sales try to point the Lawmen in the right direction. ... Weston has a new coach -- Kevin Fitzsimmons -- with the hope of playing the ball more on the ground. ... Harding also has a new coach (Tyson Buerkle) with his main goal being to build a team-first mentality. . . Oxford plays its first season as varsity with Dylan Banziruk and Tyler Black as its only seniors. ... Fairfield Ludlowe has a solid core in Joey Sisca, Chris Hyen and Casper Gimand with intentions of cracking the top eight in the FCIAC. ... Kolbe Cathedral is trying to get back into the state playoff mix with players like David Vega, Jose Lara, Mario Laonna and Hector Pommills providing a veteran presence.

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