

QuEd up for Education

People and programs impacting our QCSD community



Optimism high as fall sports teams begin practice

By Gary Weckselblatt

More than 400 high school athletes were back at practice this week as fall sports and marching band took to Quakertown Community School District fields in full force to begin preparing for the 2018 season.

"This is a very exciting time," said Sylvia Kalas, the district's athletic director. "All the athletes are back. All the coaches are back. This is for real. They're starting and building for the season now."

For some, there's not much time to build. The golf team has six matches scheduled before school begins on September 4, including Thursday and Friday competitions -- home and away -- against Central Bucks South. Boys soccer hosts Liberty Monday, girls tennis plays at Lansdale Catholic Tuesday, and girls volleyball opens Wednesday at Northampton.

"Not much practice time before the first match," golf Coach Nick Hood said during Tuesday's workout at Locust Valley Country Club.

Last year, the golfers were among six QCHS teams to win the Suburban One League's American Conference Sportsmanship Award in a vote of coaches. Lacrosse and the boys teams in bowling, cross country, soccer and volleyball were also selected for the honor.

"We have a lot of those players back, and that's exciting," Hood said. "I've known many of them since they were freshman, and have seen their growth each summer. Now it's time to start anew. When 17-year-old boys are saying they're starting to get bored, you know it's time to get started. They're enthusiastic, they're nice kids and that makes it fun for me."

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FALL SPORTS

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If any team should be in shape for the start of the season, it's girls soccer. They had optional practices a week early and even worked outdoors in the rain on the district's new synthetic surface behind the high school. They've spent four hours a day, beginning at 6 a.m., on the turf.

"The kids in this school are fantastic," coach Mike Koch said. "They're dedicated. You'd think teenagers wouldn't be into it at 6 a.m., but they are."

After reaching the playoffs for the first time in school history, Koch said he'll be counting on senior leadership to help the team continue to succeed.

Haley Pursel, perhaps the district's top athlete as she was named to the All-State team as a junior, believes the energy from last year's playoff squad

can "transfer over" for 2018. The area's top midfielder said seniors are taking the younger players under their wing with breakfasts together and sleepovers, making the younger students feel comfortable with the veterans. She contends those relationships "will help us on the field."

Inside the high school, girls volleyball had a terrific turnout with about 40 competitors at practice, and another 10-15 expected later this week.

"I'm really excited with our numbers," Coach Kellie Csrenko said. "The first week is always about mechanics and fundamentals. I'm excited for the season. We've got a good group of seniors. I'm really counting on us making progress and working as a team."

Three new coaches are taking over fall programs: Kathy Anderson in girls tennis, Lee Bishop in boys soccer, and Mike Mooney in cross country.

Kalas said the district "hit a goldmine" with Mooney and assistant coach Dawn Ciccone. Both are veteran runners. Kalas said Mooney is a champion miler in the masters category. Ciccone is a veteran of 25 marathons.

"Cross country is the ultimate team sport," Mooney said. "You can have the best runner in the state, but if there aren't four guys or gals right behind, you've got nothing."

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