



MOLLY J. SMITH/STATESMAN JOURNAL

From left, Maggie Roth, Bella Jensen, Savannah Reilly and Katie Sinn pose for a picture at a Silverton High School soccer practice in Silverton.

Silverton girls soccer looks to build on last season's success



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From left, Silverton High School soccer captains Brylee Mead, Maggie Roth and Savannah Reilly pose for a picture at practice.

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As the only returning senior starter from a team that reached the Class 5A girls soccer state championship game last season, Silverton midfielder Maggie Roth realizes that it will take time for the Foxes to become a cohesive unit.

But there's no reason to lower expectations.

"I don't think it's in our best interests to lower the bar. I think that's bad for your team," said Roth, a second-team all-state selection last season. "I think we can do what we did last year if we just work and come together, but we have a lot to do."

In addition to the graduation of Hannah Munson, another second-team all-state selection from 2016, the Foxes will not have sophomore striker Paige Alexander, who is playing for the Portland Thorns FC Girls Development Academy as a member of the U17 team.

Alexander scored 33 of the Foxes' 61 goals last season and was the 5A co-player of the year. She also was the Statesman Journal's girls soccer player of the year.

Members of the Portland Thorns FC by club rule are not permitted to play for their high school teams.

"I really loved playing with Silverton, just the connection with the team was amazing," Alexander said. "It's sad for me, but I'm extremely happy and excited to be playing with the Thorns Academy and I'm going to come watch the (Silverton) girls as much as I can and give 'em all my support."

Fourth-year Silverton head coach Gary Cameron learned late in the spring that Alexander would not be part of the 2017 team, and he supports Alexander's decision. So do her former teammates.

But replacing Alexander's scoring will be a challenge.

"She was our key shooter so we've definitely had to change things up, get other people to shoot more," said Bella Jensen, a junior defender/center-midfielder. "It's definitely a tough loss."

"We miss her a lot, but I think we can do it without her. We've got some good shooters coming in."

Jensen is one of only three returning juniors from last season's roster along with defenders Katie Sinn and Savannah Reilly, a co-captain with Roth and senior midfielder Brylee Meade.

Half of Silverton's 2017 roster consists of sophomores and freshmen.

Cameron said it will take time to develop chemistry with so many first-year varsity players, but there is plenty of talent to work with.

"It's good to be us," Cameron said. "We've got good kids, we've got a good facility and we're gonna pursue excellence."

Silverton was 14-4-1 overall last season (5-1-1 Mid-Willamette Conference) and placed third in the league behind Corvallis and Crescent Valley. The Foxes played their best in the playoffs. The Foxes coveted their best in the playoffs, a script they hope to duplicate this season.

Despite the departures of key players from the state runner-up team, Reilly said expectations remain high.

Silverton opens league competition Oct. 3 at home against Central, and the most difficult league games on paper are at the end of the regular season against Crescent Valley (Oct. 19 at home) and Corvallis (Oct. 24 on the road).

"I think by midseason we're gonna be pretty solid and the target will probably remain on our back," Reilly said.

There may be some growing pains early, but that's to be expected from such a young team with so many parts to re-



DANIELLE PETERSON / STATESMAN JOURNAL FILE

Sophomore Paige Alexander, who led the Foxes with 33 goals last season, has elected to play for the Portland Thorns FC Development Academy.

place.

No one has played more minutes than Roth, who Cameron says is "everything a leader should be."

"I need to show my team how we play and kind of connect us together," said Roth, a three-sport standout in soccer, basketball and softball. "We definitely need to grow together as a team and bond, just build up their confidence."

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Boys soccer

Mid-Willamette Conference: When is Woodburn not the favorite to win the league? The team won the 5A state cham-

pionship last season and graduated every all-league player on the roster, but there's a reason Woodburn has been a state power for a decade. Dallas should be improved with a senior class including Michael Davison, Ian Porter and Jonathan Dressel.

Girls soccer

Mid-Willamette Conference: Last year's state semifinalists Silverton and Crescent Valley should battle defending league champion Corvallis for the top spot in the league. Central returns a junior class that includes Sophia Henke, Ana Becerra and Allison Wells and should move up in the conference.