

Eagles soar past Blake in girls soccer opener

By **JOHN SHERMAN**

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Perfect weather and a nearly perfect performance by the Eden Prairie High girls soccer team Aug. 24 resulted in a 5-1 win over the Blake School in the 2019 season opener.

"The girls we have in our program every year make this an amazing experience," Eden Prairie head coach Jessica Mueller said. "Going into the first game, I wasn't sure where our scoring would come from." But several players were pleased to provide the answer.

Mim Marsan, a sophomore, came out of her holding mid position to convert two long-range shots.

"Mim's shots were both into the upper 90 from about 25 yards out," Mueller said. "She sees the game so well and she is very good at going forward. Mim can play anywhere on the field, but holding mid is the position we need her at right now."

Marsan had an assist to go with her two goals. Teammates Erica Golenzer scored a goal, while Carrie Byrnes and Leah

Engh each had a goal and an assist. Blake's only goal was scored in the second half by Amelia Reyes.

While she was pleased with Eden Prairie's offense, coach Mueller liked the defense, as well. First-team All-State center back Rachel Boelke has returned for her senior season and is joined by another outstanding back, Kenna Markle.

"Rachel is over 6 feet tall," Mueller said. "She's so good on the ball. In the first game, she and Kenna dominated the field. We are still trying to find our other starting defenders."

Mueller said one of the rewards of coaching is seeing players improve from year to year.

Carrie Byrnes, an All-State candidate in soccer and hockey this year, is one example.

"It is neat to see a senior like Carrie, who is still improving," Mueller said. "Her work rate and speed make her an outstanding player. This year she is more in control and has a plan when she goes forward with the ball."

Last season the Eagles made it to the championship game of Section



(PHOTO BY MARK TROCKMAN - TROCKSTOCK.COM)

Eden Prairie's Ellie Phillips (16) competes for a header against The Blake School's Carly Shoemate during a 5-1 Eden Prairie victory Saturday, Aug. 24, at EP's Aerie Stadium.

2AA before losing to Minnetonka on a goal in the last 20 seconds of the match. Minnetonka went on to win the state

Class AA title two weeks later.

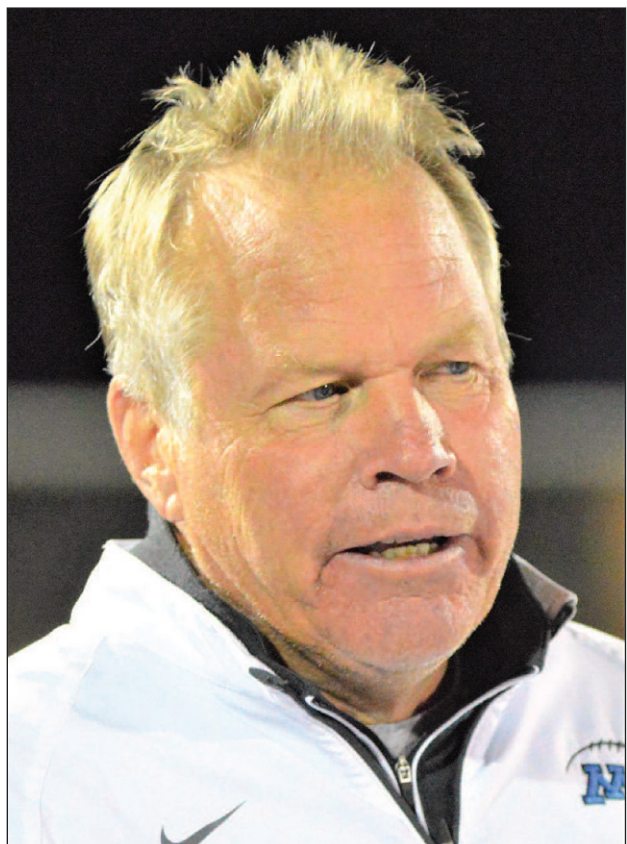
Minnetonka one of the favorites in the Lake Conference this year, but

don't count out Eden Prairie, Edina and Wayzata.

"Everyone we coach against in the Lake is a

good person, who is there for the right reasons," Mueller said. "That is what makes the games so much fun."

Skippers travel to Eastview for football opener



(SUN STAFF PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Minnetonka High football coach Dave Nelson has two Prep Bowl championships on his resume.

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Minnetonka football coach Dave Nelson opens his 42nd prep season at 7 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 29, when the Skippers kick off the 2019 season at Eastview High in Apple Valley.

After his team looked good in a four-way scrimmage against Cretin-Derham Hall, Rosemount and Champlin Park Saturday, Aug. 24, Nelson said, "It was a beautiful day on our new turf, and a felt good about the whole day. There are always going to be some opening-day mistakes, but the kids were focused and we played well. We found out that Cretin has some really good team speed."

Speaking of speed, Min-

netonka has one of the fastest backs in the metro area, junior Ben Tolkinen. In the scrimmage Saturday, Tolkinen served notice.

"Ben looked really quick and made some good cuts," Nelson said. "And our quarterback [Luke Tollefson] did a nice job."

On the defensive side of the ball, Nelson was impressed with the play of senior linebacker and captain Elliott Ische and 6-5, 290-pound senior lineman Carvon Gurley.

Nelson added that several juniors, who are new to varsity, looked good in the offensive line.

Kicker Pierce Zabilla, who also plays on the soccer team, impressed Nelson.

Looking to the matchup

against Eastview, Nelson said, "They qualified for the State Tournament last year. The Eastview coaching staff gets it, and their guys are scrappy on defense."

Nelson has always entrusted the Skippers' defense to his long-time assistant, defensive coordinator Greg Clough.

"We are senior-heavy on defense this year," Nelson said.

In addition to being heavy with seniors, the Skipper players are heavy on the scales, thanks to a good off-season in the weight room at the Pagel Center.

Nelson will have his usual collection of players who weigh in above 260 pounds.

A member of the Minnesota High School Football Coaches' Hall of Fame, Nelson is a traditionalist, who loves block-and-tackle football. Nelson was involved in football almost from the time he could walk, as the son of Anoka coaching legend Stan Nelson, who is also in the coaches' association hall of fame. Going into the 2019 season, he has two Prep Bowl championships, one at Blaine and one at Minnetonka. He has coached in other Prep Bowl games, the latest of which was a loss to Eden Prairie in the 2017 championship game at U.S. Bank Stadium.

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