

striking at success

Teammates express
thoughts on girls
soccer season,
bonds created
by players

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Through many successful seasons of girls soccer at Blue Valley, this season is a unique one — four freshmen made the varsity team.

Freshman **Anna Todd** said she heard from the boys that tryouts were going to be difficult.

“You have to do a lot of running and conditioning,” Todd said. “I really tried not to over think anything. I just wanted to try and play my best at tryouts and see what happened from there.”

Senior **Bridget Howard** said the freshmen who made varsity are deserving and a great addition to the team.

“I love having freshmen on the team,” Howard said. “The four girls who made varsity proved themselves from the beginning, and each deserved a spot.”

As one of four freshmen on varsity, Todd said while she feels pressure to play well, the girls are great teammates and friends.

“At the beginning I was really nervous,” Todd said. “Since I’m a freshman, I didn’t want them to think I was trying to show off in any way. So far it’s great, and we’re already becoming best friends.”

Soccer coach **K. Dean Snell** said the freshmen on varsity bring talent to the team.

“Aside from the great physical skill



▶ **Running up the field**, senior Bridget Howard passes the ball to a teammate. Howard is one of the varsity team captains. “We worked hard during the offseason, and now it’s time to prove ourselves,” she said.



▶ **Changing directions**, freshman Anna Todd looks for an open teammate to pass to. Todd is one of four freshman on varsity. “I didn’t expect to make varsity, but when I did, I was really happy,” she said.

and speed [the freshmen] have, they also bring what we call a very high soccer ‘IQ,’ meaning a very good understanding of the game in all phases — attacking, defending and ball-skill abilities,” Snell said.

Howard said the girls on the team have bonded well.

“Our team chemistry this year has been unlike any other,” she said. “We decided to do big sisters and little sisters, which has been a lot of fun. It has brought us together with the underclassmen. We do things outside of soccer, and it makes us closer as a team.”

Howard said being named captain for the 2016 season changed her role on the team.

“Staying calm and positive in intense situations and motivating the team when times get tough are equally important qualities when it comes to being a leader,” Howard said. “Being a good leader not only applies to on the field but off the field as well. It’s important to be a good role model to the underclassmen and help them adapt to the varsity level.”

Todd said her personal mission on this team is to become the best player she can be throughout the season so she can help the Tigers reach their goals.

“I play center midfield and defensive mid,” Todd said. “I hope to try and score as many goals as I can when I get the opportunity in the game, try to play my very best in every single match and distribute the ball to my teammates.”

Snell said the team works hard daily.

“We try to improve every day whether it is in a match or practice,” Snell said. “If we can continue doing this, we will be able to look back and say we played to the best of our ability every day. When we do this and we outperform our opponents, that’s when we recognize success.”

As a team, Todd said the goal is to win games and qualify for State.

“We want to make it as far as we can, hopefully in the playoffs and eventually try to win State,” she said. “Personally, I want to try and get better in my position to contribute to my teammates.”

Todd said starting the game as a freshman can be a little stressful when you are swarmed with upperclassmen, but once you start playing, it all goes away.

“I feel pressure because during games you don’t want to be the one that messes up a lot,” Todd said. “At the same time, I still have three more years to play, so I have a lot of time to learn and improve myself as a player.”

Howard said many unique opportunities come along with the soccer season, and she is excited to experience all of it.

“I’m looking forward to our bus rides, team dinners, bonding and winning,” Howard said. “High school soccer is [great] because we all know each other so well, and I am going to miss the girls a lot. I’m looking forward to a great season with this team and making it a memorable last year of soccer here at Blue Valley.”