

By Carl Setterlund

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May 03, 2016 5:03PM

Carl Setterlund: Trio help Westboro girls' lacrosse to unbeaten start

In 2012, Westboro High girls' lacrosse graduated a once-in-a-generation group of talent in the trio of **Jill Horka**, **Brigid Bowser** and **Anna Petrunich**, along with all-star goalie **Hanna Bjork**.

Horka (Boston University), Bowser (Tufts) and Petrunich (Marist) have all gone on to successful college careers, but not before helping the Rangers to three Central Mass. Division 1 titles.

Now, longtime coach **Colleen Debish** has another talented trio she has been grooming for another run at a title, and so far, juniors **Kaleigh Wright**, **Olivia Weckwerth** and **Nicole Foster** have top-ranked Westboro sitting at 9-0 after back-to-back wins over Duxbury and Bromfield.



"I think the real strength of our team this year is our juniors," Debish said. "There are three juniors that played for me as freshmen, so they've been there. They're awesome. The nice thing is we don't have to look to one girl because we've got some good depth."

Wright is recognized as the top goalie in Central Mass. and backs it up with an area-best 4.85 goals against average, while Weckwerth (18 goals, 27 assists) and Foster (33 goals, 12 assists) are the team's top two scorers and both among the top five in points in CMass.

Those two have good bloodlines. Weckwerth is the younger sister of **Sam Weckwerth** — last year's team captain — and Foster is the younger sister of **Jake Foster**, who was the captain of the boys' lacrosse team last year and now plays at Division 1 Albany.

"Those three have really been the core of the program, even when they were sophomores, and we've been building other kids around them," Debish said.

Debish said one difference between the last trio she had and this one is the depth around her three standouts.

"I think we have more balance and depth. It's nice when you can go 13-14 girls deep and not have a drop-off in your play."

That includes senior captains **Sarah Bracey** (19 goals, 16 assists), **Olivia Harwood** (14 goals, 5 assists) and **Carter Bromm**, who is the only returning defensive player from last year's team, apart from the goalie Wright.

There's also another young wave of talent coming. The junior varsity team is undefeated, and that's without freshman **Chloe Goebel**, who scored her second game-winner of the season in overtime against Bromfield on Monday. Goebel also led the team with four goals against the Trojans.

The game before, last Saturday against Duxbury, the Rangers fought back from a four-goal deficit in the first half to beat one of the perennial top teams in the state, 15-13.

"I was really happy the way they battled and came back and won it," Debish said. "The kids were incredible. It's a great group of kids, and they're versatile."

On Monday against Bromfield, a 9-8 overtime win, Debish was especially impressed by her defense, which held the Trojans scoreless over the final two minutes of regulation and overtime.

"I always stress that everybody can play great defense if you put the effort in," Debish said.

With two of the toughest games on the schedule out of the way, the Rangers — who are 5-0 in Mid-Wach A — have a chance to go undefeated during the regular season, despite one of the area's toughest schedules.

"They want to achieve at a high level, and they've been doing that," Debish said.

Still remaining, though, are road games against Hopkinton, Groton-Dunstable, Grafton and Algonquin.

"We don't even talk about it," Debish said. "We're just trying to get better every time we're on the field, and these tough games against top opponents, we know we need to bring out 'A' games."

A district title might be tough, given the change to a Central-West alignment that puts fellow powerhouse Longmeadow in the same bracket as Westboro every year. That used to be the Rangers' annual state semifinal opponent.

This year's junior class, though, gives Westboro its best chance at a title in five years.

Bromfield's progress

After beating Westboro in overtime last year, second-ranked Bromfield got the other end of that deal on Monday in the rematch, but the upside was the continued emergence of junior midfielder **Meaghan Parlee**, who led all players with five goals.

The Rangers contained area scoring leader **Soph Turchetta** effectively, holding her to one goal, but Parlee (38 goals) has made it harder for other teams to face-guard or double team Turchetta, the area's consensus top player.

"Usually when teams face guard (Turchetta) we just laugh and say, OK, Meg, now it's your turn," Bromfield coach **Dave Planchet** said, while also crediting Westboro's defensive game.

Planchet said the duo reminds him of his Division 2 state finalist squad in 2014, when Turchetta had another star foil in **Jackie Planchet**, who was a 100-point scorer that year.

"They maturity of her game, now we're like our team of two years ago where we had two potential ballhandlers and scorers," Planchet said. "(Turchetta) commands the midfield, and she does the same on the offensive end."

"When you have a kid like that, it's a huge asset, and I'm just lucky enough to have two of them," Planchet added.

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