

# Weston High School's Fall *"Teams of the Decade"*

By: Athletic Director Mike McGrath

Thanksgiving was a little different last week than what we all are accustomed to. There were smaller gatherings around the table, less travel to visit family, limited time spent with friends back from college and of course there was NO Thanksgiving Day High School Football. This year due to the global pandemic that we all are navigating through there was no Weston vs. Wayland Thanksgiving morning football game. The 85<sup>th</sup> meeting of these two rivals will need to wait until at least early spring when they will hopefully put the pads on once again.

With no game recap to fill the local papers, I thought this would be a great opportunity to reflect upon the last decade of fall sports teams at Weston High School. The smallest school within the powerful Dual County League has the ability to pack a punch just like some of our counterparts with school sizes two and three times ours. Weston has had an incredible sports history and it is time to look back over the past decade and select our "Top Fall Teams of the Decade".

**Please Note:** we will be selecting our top winter and spring (including Crew) teams later as we approach those seasons.

## **2014 Field Hockey Team – 17-2-2 overall / 15-1-2 regular season – D2 Sectional Finalist**

### **Coach: Kim (Desto) Good**

Coming to Weston after 3 years at the helm of Newton South's field hockey program, Coach Good found herself with a very talented team hungry for success. Replacing the very successful Laura Galopin who moved on to Lexington High School as their field hockey coach, Coach Good was now in charge of one of the premier field hockey programs in the state and she did not disappoint. Along with assistant coaches Anne Dauchy and Lindsey Schoolcraft, Coach Good brought an all-inclusive concept to the program. One that paid big dividends as the season unfolded.

Rolling through the season with their only regular season loss to eventual D1 State Champion Acton-Boxboro, this team had it all. Rarely is there a team that has such a great combination of talented players from across all grades. "The dynamic of this team was something that I believe was the reason we had so much success that season. These kids truly loved one another across all grades. We weren't sure what to expect coming into this season, but we did know that this team was made up of some really strong athletes. Right away we knew we needed to up our game as coaches. I think we developed a good player-coach relationship with the team from the beginning and it was clear that we were all on the same page and were working toward the same goals of success because everyone could feel the potential" said Coach Good.

Led by Boston College bound Elizabeth Dennehy, as well as fellow seniors Ainsley Gilbard, Rebecca Black, Jodi Foote, Jennifer Howard and Olivia Kane these Wildcats had one goal in mind

and that was to stop the Watertown Field Hockey dynasty. However, there was work to do and it all began with a convincing non-league win at Winchester High School followed by nine additional games without a loss before meeting up with Acton Boxboro on their turf – a field that would produce one of the most exciting victories for the Wildcats in team history in the State Tournament later in the year. With both teams undefeated at the time it was reminiscent of a heavyweight battle. As the game teetered back and forth, AB would prove to be just a little better that day pulling out a 3-1 win. That would be the only regular season blemish as the team headed into the State Tournament as the #3 seed due to a lost a coin toss with Lynnfield who also entered the tournament at 15-1-2 both behind 18-0 Watertown. After a bye in the first round the Wildcats hosted a solid Gloucester team in Weston. A 4-0 convincing victory proved to be a nice tune up for the semi-final game everyone was hoping for. 16-1-2 Weston vs. 16-1-2 Lynnfield for the chance to dethrone Watertown.

As with every November, the weather can be very unpredictable. This year was no different. On a bitterly cold and windy night the MIAA scheduled two of the very best teams in the state to battle it out. However, 48 minutes was not enough to decide this classic. As the night grew darker and the cold ate through the warmest clothing more time was needed. It did not end quickly as the game extended into the night. After a called back corner goal by Lynnfield, sophomore Meg Peacher scored the game winner with 1:36 remaining in overtime sending the Weston sidelines into a frenzy and the fans in attendance to the comfort of their heated cars – with a huge smile. This was Meg's second goal of the game.

What started as a new beginning for this program in mid-August had now transformed into an opportunity of a lifetime and a match-up with powerhouse and defending State Champion Watertown. Winner most likely on their way to raising the trophy as champions. Although the game did not end the way we would all have liked, a 2-0 loss to was nothing to feel bad about. Coach Good summed it up best “that Watertown game was pretty special. It was basically 1-0 until the very end when they called a stroke against us. I will never forget the energy the kids brought that day, and every single player had their incredibly best game of the season – including Marie McMahon who was our GK and made around 30 saves. She was beyond phenomenal. Looking back on that performance, it was definitely one of my proudest moments as a coach for how the kids stepped up and showed up.” Weston Field Hockey was back!

***Congratulations to the 2014 Weston Field Hockey Team – Field Hockey Team of the Decade***

## **2012 Boys Cross Country**

**Coach: John Monz**

Every now and again a runner arrives at Weston High School that sets themselves apart from the rest. The 2012 Boys Cross country team had that runner. The Weston Cross Country teams over the years have been blessed with many outstanding runners who have gone onto the next level and performed incredibly. In 2012 Weston was led by Matt Herzig and a number of high achieving

teammates which included the likes of Geoffrey Pendergast, Eli Curme, Gavin McEwenand Conor James, Adam Dvorak & Miller Ward. This group was special. Handling the DCL with ease is not easy task for any school, especially one many times a third of the size of most of our opponents. Unlike other sports, cross country typically does not get the large crowds or screaming fans, but those that do come to watch truly appreciate the sport and the athletes that participate. At the conclusion of each season the prestigious Dual County League Meets takes place showcasing the top runners from each school within the league. In 2012 Matt Herzig led the way at the Franklin Park course taking home the DCL Individual Championship over a very talented field. This was the start of a nice run of “first” for this team.

In order to qualify for the opportunity to run at the All-State Meet, teams have to finish in the top six at the State Meet. This team did just that and rode the wave of their success to a 7<sup>th</sup> place All-State finish which longtime cross country and track coach John Monz said was one of the best finish in school history on the boys side and the best within this past decade. “This team top to bottom was one of the most talented we have had here in Weston” said Coach Monz. Aside from Herzig who had an incredible career running for Dartmouth College as well as finishing 6<sup>th</sup> in the 2018 Philadelphia Marathon and 12<sup>th</sup> at the prestigious Boston Marathon also in 2018, this group also included Pendergast running for Connecticut College, Curme running for Stonehill and McEwenand who actually joined Herzig at Dartmouth, but represented the Big Green on the slopes for their ski team.

### ***Congratulations 2012 Boys Cross Country Team – Boys Cross Country Team of the Decade***

### **2015 Golf Team – 14-1 – D3 State Champions – D3 Sectional Champions – DCL Champions Coach – Mary O’Brien**

Weston Golf has become synonymous with success. Year in and year out Coach O’Brien’s teams are contenders for the State Championship. They are the high school version of the New England Patriots – always in the hunt for the ultimate prize. Selecting one team within the past decade to represent golf was extremely difficult, however it’s hard to argue with the success of the 2015 Weston Golf team.

Led by MIAA Individual State Champion and current Boston College golfer Nick Cummings who also was recently named All-New England Rookie of the Year this team had an abundance of talented players. Add in Henry Hall (Wake Forest Club Golf), Justin Efron (University of Miami Club Golf), Henry’s younger brother Andrew Hall, Ryan Doorandish and current Wesleyan College Captain Noah Cate and this team was a force to be reckoned with.

As every coach knows, you cannot win at the high school level with just a few talented student-athletes. What makes a team great is a roster filled with athletes who understand their role and when called upon rise to the occasion. This team had all of that and more. With the season opening the first week in September it was Boston Latin who had the daunting task to try and tackle the Wildcats, but a convincing win over BL led to seven additional victories throughout the month of September and five more to start October before Lincoln Sudbury met the Wildcats at Weston’s

Pine Brook Country Club. A 119-107 lost ended up being the only blemish on an otherwise clean slate of wins including sectionals and states. Prior to the start of sectional and state play the DCL conducts their Medalist Tournament which consist of the top golfers from the league. Low score wins and in holding serve as the top team in the league Weston's Henry Hall brought home the honor of DCL Individual Medalist Champion.

As with most of our other sports teams that play within the Dual County League this year's version of Weston Golf was primed for post season play to begin come mid-October. Far Corners Golf Course in Boxford was the host to the D3 Sectional Tournament. Although this team had big contributions from many players throughout the year once tournament play begins only each team's top six golfers compete with the top four scores begin calculated as the team score. A total team score of 317 was good enough to secure the D3 North Sectional Championship over a strong Austin Prep team that came in 2 shots behind at 319. From there, Cummings, H. Hall, Doorandish, Efron A. Hall and Cate along with coach O'Brien made their way to Cummaquid Golf Club in Barnstable for the State Championship a week later. Unlike most teams, the Wildcats are always well prepared. Coach O'Brien had the team there over the weekend playing/walking the course (Coach O'Brien does this every year) to prepare for the ultimate prize – a state championship.

As play in the State Championships began all eyes were on the Wildcats as their reputation for success had and continues to precede them whenever they play. This year was no different. With each Weston golfer playing within a mixed group it took time for all the foursomes to make their way back to the clubhouse and have their scores recorded. As scores trickled in, there was no doubt the Cats had come to play demolishing the field by 23 strokes to take home yet another State Championship to Weston. Nick Cummings' 69 led the way as their overall score came in at 304 to Martha's Vineyard's 327.

Coach O'Brien's comments after the win; "This senior group was outstanding; they were part of the previous two State Championship teams and set a great example for the underclassmen to what it means to be a member of the Weston Golf Team".

### ***Congratulations to the 2015 Weston Golf Team – Golf Team of the Decade***

### **2012 Boys Soccer Team – 9-4-3 overall record – D3 North Sectional Finalist**

#### **Coach: Thomas McEnrey**

Three years after winning the schools first Boys State Championship in soccer the 2012 team under second year coach Thomas McEnrey was on a mission to make their way back to the State Finals. Coming off a 3-14-1 2011 season which saw the Wildcats be shut out in 12 of their 17 games, 2012 was an opportunity for a fresh start. Through its first four games that fall, Weston matched its win total from the previous year. The Wildcats outscored opponents 8-3 in going 3-0-1, including a come-from-behind win over DCL powerhouse Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School before dropping a 5-2 contest to Acton Boxboro in the following game. From there the team finished out the remainder of their regular season 6-3-2 and headed for a return trip to the MIAA D3 North Tournament.

Sitting at the #8 seed in the D3 North Sectional bracket which consisted of 21 teams that year, the Cats received a preliminary round bye and would host #9 seed Cristo Rey from Boston in the opening round. Cristo Rey was an explosive offensive team that entered the tournament at 9-5-1. However, Weston was up for the challenge and would come away with a 4-1 victory and now a matchup with the top team in the bracket – Boston International at Ceylon Field in Dorchester. The 14-3 Lions had disposed of Manchester 3-1 in their opening game and did not miss a beat dominating much of this quarter-final game scoring only 2:30 in and holding that lead until magic hit the Wildcats. With six minutes left to play the game was tied at one, then the game-winning goal four minutes later. Senior Andrew Bromfield got the winner for Weston assisted by senior Chason Timko. That sent the Weston sidelines as well as those that made the trip to Dorchester into a frenzy. However, sometimes four minutes on the clock in soccer is not always what it seems as the final four minutes took possibly 20 minutes as the officials on site continued to allow for extra play. Once the final whistle blew the game was still in an interesting place. With no administration there from Boston International, spectators there to root on Boston International stormed the field with the intention to mix things up. Weston was sent directly to their bus and BI team and fans sent home stunned.

This win propelled the Wildcats into the D3 North Semi-Finals vs. 14-4-2 Rockport High School who had advanced after beating St. Mary's of Lynn a favorite to win the bracket. The semi-final matchup was scheduled to be played at Arlington High School at 7pm which coincidentally was immediately after the Weston Girls Team who was also there facing off at 5pm against Mystic Valley in their semi-final game. It would turn out to be a great night for Weston High School Soccer! A 2-0 victory over Rockport in which the Wildcats would dominate scoring in each half and not allowing many offensive scoring opportunities for the Vikings. The victory placed the Wildcats back into a familiar place – the D3 Sectional Final game vs. 13-2-6 Watertown to be played at the Manning Bowl in Lynn in what would turn out to be a thriller.

Led by seniors Mark Fishman, Seth Kapreilian, Dan Lang, Robert Barron, Andrew Bromfield, James Reohr, Christian Rougeau, Craig Shytle, Ben Spector and Chason Timko this group had the experience and understood what it takes to be a successful program. All these tremendously talented players were in the program the last time Weston claimed the ultimate prize in boys' soccer and knew what it took to shake off the previous season and succeed in 2012. Add in a junior class that consisted of Pete Banks, Mike Brewer, Sam Cekala, Mason Clark, Danny Dino, Daniel Eluchans, Joseph Esposito, Niko Kalemios, Matt Keefe, Reid Knapp, Chris Kollard, Nick Koutrakis, Baily Poritzky, William Reohr, Andrew Salkewicz, Jack Shay, Tenzin Sangpo, Ross Taylor and Pat Timperio and the Cats were primed for a memorable campaign in 2012. All players were contributors in one way or another throughout the year.

When you have two soccer program who were as evenly matched as Weston and Watertown was in 2012 typically regulation time does not separate. That was the case on Monday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012. 100 minutes was not enough to determine the D3 North Sectional winner as the game would be decided by penalty kicks. Unfortunately, it was Watertown that prevailed 5-3 on kicks to take the crown. As Coach McEnrey said: "We were in it for the whole game, it was just heartbreaking to go out on penalties, to be honest, you can't fault the boys, you cannot fault their effort." An Andrew Bromfield goal late in the first half saw the game tied heading into the last 40 minutes of play (or at

least we thought there were only 40 minutes left). Both teams would have their chances in the second half, but the game remained tied at one as the final whistle would blow signifying the end of regulation. In the 20-minute overtime session a free kick by the Cats that almost broke through would have iced the game, but the Watertown goalie would sprawl to cover up right before the ball crossed the goal line. As penalty shots began to take place to determine who would continue their season it initially looked like a no one was going to emerge as each team would score on their first of five shots, but in the end it was Watertown that would grab the 5-3 advantage in PK's and be deemed a 2-1 winner capturing the D3 North Sectional title.

***Congratulations to the 2012 Boys Soccer Team – Boys Soccer Team of the Decade***

### **2011 Girls Cross Country Team**

**Coach: John Monz**

Losing in a tie breaker is not what anyone would think pertains to the sport of Cross Country, but in 2011 this “Team of the Decade” tied Hamilton-Wenham in points once all runners had crossed the finish line at the Eastern Mass D5 State Meet. However, based on the finish of all the runners within the race from each school, it was Hamilton-Wenham that prevailed by 1 point to be crowned EMass D5 State Champion. Although heartbreaking, this tremendously talented team had many other accomplishments this season that would cement them into Weston Cross Country history. Coach Monz would say, “this is clearly our best team ever”.

Building off their amazing DCL season in which they secured that title early on with impressive wins at league meets, and their EMass “tie” with Hamilton-Wenham, this squad was made up of runners that would set the tone for future teams. The top seven runners consisted of seniors Olivia Brackett who ran for Colgate for two years before transferring to Michigan and running for the Wolverines and Charlotte Walmsley who had a great career running for Brown University. Add in juniors Abigail Phol who would run for Middlebury College, Edom Wessenyeleh and Lina Makino as well as sophomores Read Allen who would also run at Middlebury and Zoe Snow who would later take her talents to the Nordic track and ski for Dartmouth College.

After the EMass State Meet it was on the Nike Northeast Regionals where the Cats competed against the best from all of New England, New Jersey and Pennsylvania (8 states). A very impressive 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish there nearly led to an invitation to the Nike Nationals, but pesky Hamilton-Wenham reared its head again winning the meet as the Wildcats finished one point out of qualifying. Quoting Coach Monz, “never could quite beat them”. Many took notice of this teams’ accomplishments and they were selected by MileSplit USA as one of the Top 50 teams in the country that year.

***Congratulations 2011 Girls Cross Country Team – Girls Cross Country Team of the Decade***

**2014 Football Team – 7-4 overall record – 2<sup>nd</sup> Place DCL Small**

## **Coach: Sean McHugh**

Coming into the 2014 football season there were high hopes for this team. A senior laden squad that was athletic and well-balanced promised to provide Weston with high hopes for the fall. Add in a scheduling change by the Dual County League that would see the Cats face rival and nemeses Wayland twice during the season – a regular season matchup (W-Day) and a Thanksgiving Day match-up. Fourth year coach Sean McHugh knew he had a special bunch of players and Weston Football was ready to take off once again.

However, an opening night loss to Dover-Sherborn may have cast doubt on many programs, but this resilient group of players and coaching staff rebounded nicely with four consecutive victories – one which was against Wayland High School at 7pm on Proctor Field on September 27<sup>th</sup> which was on the inaugural W-Day (Weston vs. Wayland in all fall sports – Weston prevailing as the W-Day winner). A convincing 20-6 win over Wayland that night saw the Wildcats simply deny the Warriors of any sustained offense and propelled the Cats toward a potential berth in the “new” MIAA playoff tournament and a possible DCL Small Championship. But the following week saw Concord Carlisle on the schedule. CC would toughen out a 20-6 win which was much closer than the score reflected as CC would score late to solidify the victory. Although a league championship was now not a reality, qualifying for the tournament was and after a 35-0 first quarter lead over Boston Latin that led to a convincing victory and a 5-2 record through seven games.

As the “new” playoff system seeded teams based on quality of wins/actual wins the Wildcats found themselves as the #4 seed in D5 and a match-up with Triton High School at Proctor Field on Halloween night. Unfortunately, Triton would move on in the tournament after a very close first half before solidifying the game in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. This now left the Cats to face teams that also had fallen in their first-round matchups. Still very strong teams, the next two weeks vs. Hamilton Wenham and Watertown would prove to be hard fought and very satisfying. A 14-7 win over HW now placed the Cats at 6-3 on the season with the 8-1 Raiders of Watertown next up. In one of the more entertaining games of the year, Weston would prevail in a 29-21 win and a 7-3 record heading into the Thanksgiving morning rematch with Wayland.

2014 proved to be an incredible year for Weston Athletics and much of that success was due to a senior class that would set themselves up as one of the most talented classes in school athletic history. The senior class of football players was no different. They were tough, talented, and determined. This class included: Matt Beaudry, Maurice Blake, Eduardo Castillo-Lares, Ivan Davis, Tom Dell'Eario, Collins Ebozue, James Freeman, Olubiyi Ojo, James Sacco and Ryan Welby (WHS 2015 Chandler recipient). Add in a group of juniors who were equally talented and made big contributions such as Lee Grinspoon, Chuck Ewanouski, Jack Fazio, Ari Curelop, Zane Cassum, Jordan Ayer, Harrison Kinnealey, Garrett Marquis, Hunter Meyer, Ramesh Nagarajah, Pete Noonan, Josh Olumide, Charlie Siegrist, Sam Wisnia and Liam Wren (WHS 2016 Chandler recipient) and it was clear that this team was stacked!

The 2014 Thanksgiving Day matchup with Wayland was the 80<sup>th</sup> meeting between the two schools. Leading up to this game Wayland held an edge with 47 wins to Weston's 30 and somehow there are two ties...? However, no one knew that this year would prove to be one of the most interesting Thanksgiving Day games in the long-standing history. It began like every Thanksgiving morning

with the team arriving to Weston High School between 7-7:30am usually after a good breakfast either at home or as a group at a local café. It had snowed the night before and about 5 inches of snow covered the roadways and fields. Football was a go as the plan was to play regardless of the weather. As the team loaded the traditional two buses that would take them to Wayland who was hosting this year the Wildcats were in for a surprise. Upon arriving, the team headed to the locker room while the situation on the field was not nearly as smooth. Trucks were pushing snow from sideline to sideline and things were not looking promising. As game time approached and both teams, officials, game personnel and those “early bird” spectators awaited while snow was attempted to be removed from the field. As time elapsed and the 10am game time loomed, it was announced that we would delay the start of the game an hour so that the snow could be removed from the field. However, it became very clear that although those working to clear the field were doing everything they could, it was simply too much to move and the game was postponed for two days until Saturday. It would be a different Thanksgiving Day for those from Weston and Wayland who were connected to football.

A beautiful Saturday morning allowed for this game to take place and it certainly was worth the wait. An otherwise fairly uneventful game through the first half would give those in attendance a second half that would be remembered for a long time. With Wayland up 14-7 through most of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter Tom Dell picked off a Wayland pass setting up the Wildcats at the Wayland 4-yard line. A quarterback keeper by Liam Wren would pull the cats into a tie at 14-14. A Wayland fumble and long drive from by the Cats from their own 25-yard line would put the Weston up 28-14 with just under seven minutes left in the game. However, that is when things got interesting. With the Cats in control and Wayland on offense, a whistle appeared to blow as Wayland quarterback Robert Jones threw the ball out to a wide open receiver so everybody on the field immediately stopped, but there ended up being no “supposed” whistle and the Wayland receiver ran 80 yards for an uncontested touchdown. Then after a 3 and out the Warriors pushed in another score to tie the game. After another 3 and out the Cats punted only to have Wayland return it to the 3-yard line. Two plays later and the Warriors held a 35-28 lead with under a minute left in the game. The Cats went to work and incredibly were able to work their way down the field before Wren found Maurice Blake in the endzone for what appeared to be a tying touchdown. Down 35-34 Coach Sean McHugh went for the win. A quick handoff to Peter Noonan for a two-point play was met by a Wayland linebacker feet from the endzone. Wayland prevailed 35-34 in a classic. What a game!

### ***Congratulations to the 2015 Football Team – Football Team of the Decade***

**2014 Girls Volleyball Team – 19-5 overall record/14-4 regular season record - D2 State Finalist - D2 North Sectional Champions - DCL Champions**

**Coach: Fabian Ardila**

When you have a coach that is so dedicated to building a program like Coach Fabian Ardila while at the helm of the Wildcats, it has to be extremely satisfying when it all comes together like it did with the 2014 Girls Volleyball Team – our Team of the Decade. It was a year of first for this volleyball

program that 10 years earlier had struggled to win a match, let alone a game. But when you have one of the premier volleyball coaches in the region and a group of players so focused and talented like the 2014 team was, it's a recipe for success.

The Dual County League is one of the premier leagues in the State and when it comes to volleyball possibly the top league in the Commonwealth. So, winning is difficult and teams must be tough, disciplined, fundamentally sound and of course talented. This team had it all. Winning a league title in many ways is as tough as winning a State Championship when you play in the DCL. However, this team followed up the 2012 and 2013 14-win seasons with 14 wins of their own with the programs third consecutive Dual County League title. Looking back there were not many regular season games that when you look at the schedule you place a "W" next to a particular team. With Bedford and Concord on the Cats heels for the DCL title, these games were battles. Talent on both sides of the net always provided entertainment for those in attendance.

As the team made its way through the regular season, the MIAA State Tournament loomed in the distance. When all was said and done, the Cats brought a 14-4 regular season record into the tournament and found themselves as the #5 seed in the D2 North Tournament. With 18 schools qualified for the D2 North Sectional and with Melrose and Arlington Catholic positioned as the top 2 seeds on each side of the bracket, a trip to the finals had to go through at least one of these traditional powerhouses. Weston found themselves on the same side as Melrose who happened to be the #1 seed. With a bye for the preliminary round the Cats would face Greater Lawrence in their first-round game. A convincing and quite quick 3-0 victory sent them into what everyone thought would be a #4 Marblehead vs. #5 Weston quarter-final match-up, but an upset by #13 seed Stoneham had the Cats hosting again and another 3-0 victory would be on tap for the this incredibly talented team.

When you have a future D1 outside hitter on your team, another D1 setter and 4 other extremely talented volleyball players within your starting line-up, it is a dream for a coach. Coach Fabian Ardila had seen these players progress since they were in elementary school where he would introduce the game of volleyball to Weston elementary students which was part of his master plan to build this program. Two of these players he knew from birth as they were his daughters. Gabriella a senior setter on this team had helped stabilize the program with the steady hands of a setter. Gabriella would head to play volleyball at Hofstra before transferring to finish her career at Stonehill. Sophomore Athena might be the most decorated high school player to play within the DCL. Currently a senior at D1 Northeastern, Athena has been one of the top players on Northeastern's team since her freshman year. However, another sister tandem of Emma and Kayla Lucas were also key contributors to this team's success. Emma went on to play beach volleyball at the University of Miami. Add in all time digs leader senior Melanie Anthony as well as junior Georgia Brooks and you have a championship caliber core. When you have Boston College Women's VB Coach Chris Campbell mention "You are a running D1 college tempo and succeeding. I have never seen that at the high school level", you know the program is special.

The State D2 Semi-Finals would now pit the Wildcats against top seed Melrose. Melrose entered the game with a 20-2 record and their eyes set on a return to the sectional finals. However, this Wildcat team was on a mission and were definitely not intimidated. A 7pm game on Melrose's court in a

packed house would rattle any young team, but not this one. The Cats would fall behind early in the first match, but would rebound nicely for a stunning 3-0 win and trip to the Sectional Finals vs. the top seed on the opposite bracket Arlington Catholic. Coach Ardila would say “ Our team finally came together as a team with every player playing cohesively and working just as hard as everyone else on the roster, it was amazing to see them all contribute and Melrose was stunned”. Playing on a neutral site (Woburn HS), this would be a battle. AC would prove to be a very tough opponent, taking the Cats to a fifth game. However, a 15-8 victory secured the fifth game and the match for Weston. The State Semifinals had Weston up against the MIAA West winner Minnechaug Regional High School. Traveling with a large fan base, Minnechaug sprinted out to a quick lead in the first game, but the Cats were not to be denied and rebounded with another 3-0 victory. Fulfilling their early season goal of playing on the last possible day of the fall volleyball season, Coach Ardila and his team would now face the Hillers of Hopkinton in the D2 State Final at Fitchburg High School. With an electric crowd on both sides, it was the Hillers who outlasted the Cats for the State Championship 3-0.

***Congratulations 2014 Girls Volleyball Team. Girls Volleyball Team of the Decade***

**2012 Girls Soccer Team - 6-7-4 regular season / 12-7-4 final record – D3 North Sectional Champions – D3 State Champions**

**Coach: Rich Daestrela**

It's pretty unusual that a team who finishes the regular season under .500 at 6-7-4 would be considered a Team of the Decade, but this was not your average year. Two years removed from a D3 State Championship the start of the 2012 Girls Soccer season would be anything, but normal. State Champion coach James Blackwell would leave for a position out of state just six days before the start of the season in mid-August. It would not be until a few weeks into the 2012 season that this team would bring in Rich “Frenchy” Daestrela as their new head coach. Add in current WHS head coach John Power and this staff had the makings to shape any team into a contender. However, that did not happen, at least not initially. With a once-in-a-lifetime senior class that boasted many members of the 2010 State Championship team things did not get off to the type of start everyone would have hoped. With 5 experienced starters right up the middle from goalkeeper to striker and a handful of other seniors coming off the bench who would start for most any team in the league, this team had the makings of a contender. Sprinkle in some very young talented players who broke into the line-up and Coach Daestrela had a cabinet full of quality soccer players.

Sometimes teams take some time to figure out who they are and don't know how good they can be when working a cohesive unit. This team was no different as for the first half of the DCL season

things looked bleak. With just one win through their first five games you could tell the seniors were frustrated and the younger players lacked the confidence needed to be contributing members of a team that competes in one of the top leagues in the state. It was not until a late season “team meeting” with the seniors where Coach Daestrela and Coach Power explained to this talented group that no one person is going to carry this team and that in order for their season to be something special that they can look back upon things had to change. More teamwork was needed, unselfish play was needed, and confidence had to be given to their younger counterparts. If they could accomplish this both coaches knew this team could be a force if they qualified for the state tournament. Fortunately, being a small school competing in a much larger league the Sullivan Rule applies to Weston which enables teams such as Weston who play at least 70% of their schedule against high division teams to qualify for the state tournament if they happen to go at least .500 against same or lesser division teams. Weston would go 1-1 against D3 opponents and qualify for the MIAA D3 State Tournament with an overall record of 6-7-4.

With a roster littered with college bound players and players with tremendous talent there was no doubt hard work was something they were all accustomed to. Players such as seniors Maddie Linde, Jackie Foody, Hannah Graves, Amanda Ivey, Deniz Cataltepe, Katherine Curtis, Lane Cohen, Alissa Duffy and Sarah Peters were outstanding players who all contributed to the success of this 2012 team. Add in underclassmen Lane Cronin, Tally Shea, Ilaria Santangelo, Micheala O’Laughlin, Gene Miller, Katie & Emma Marlow-Benedict, Rachel Mordecai, Samantha Vocatura to name a few and this team was stacked.

As tournament play began, the Wildcats found themselves as the #17 seed and would have to travel to #16 Georgetown High School for a preliminary round game against the Royal Lancers. As the game unfolded the pesky Lancers hung in there as the teams played through regulation and an overtime period still tied. Penalty Kicks would be needed to determine the winner. This game came down to goalkeeper Alissa Duffy coming up huge in the shootout and the team advanced 2-1 as their confidence soared. Funny side note to this game. Prior to the team leaving on their journey to Georgetown, I headed to the bus to wish them luck and let the coach know I would be at the game later that afternoon. As I approached the bus Alissa came running out informing me, she had forgotten her socks and no one on the team had an extra pair. I immediately ran into the high school and frantically went through every drawer I could find looking for a pair of socks for Alissa. Fortunately, I found a pair and gave them to her with one request “you will need to use these socks for the entire tournament and not change or wash them until the season was over”. We’ll circle back to this later in the article. From here the team exploded and plowed through the remaining games until the State Semi-Finals vs. Norwell where Alissa would once again come up big for the Cats. 3-0 over top seed Lowell Catholic in the first round, 6-0 over Minuteman in the quarter-finals, and an 8-0 victory over Mystic Valley in the semi-finals would see the Cats face off against Ipswich in the Manning Bowl in Lynn a few hours prior to our boys team falling to Watertown on PK’s in a classic. Ipswich, a team that Weston had faced the two previous years in the tournament would give the Cats a game, but a 2-0 win would propel the team to the top of D# North and a Sectional Championship. “I was told what had happened the last two years,” said Weston head coach Rich Daestrela. “It was amazing, and the girls were excited for this matchup again. For the girls, it was more about the big rivalry, and we wanted this really bad”.

As the State Semi-Finals approached it was 18-2-3 Norwell the D3 South Sectional Champion who would line-up across from the Wildcats on a cold and blistery night at Quincy's Veterans Stadium. Another 100-minute game proved to be not enough as the Cats and Clippers would head to penalty kicks. Alissa Duffy once again came up big in stopping two shots in the PK round (the other 2 sailed wide) as Hannah Graves went waist-high to her far left in the first round of penalties and Jackie Foody added an insurance goal in the third round with a shot to the top corner. On to the State Finals! Weston's defense was the story of the state finals as 17-2-1 Sutton High School would find out as the two teams faced off at Foley Stadium in Worcester for the D3 State Championship. Maddie Linde would score the first and only goal of the game redirecting a pretty pass from Hannah Graves into the far corner of the goal which allowed the Wildcats to raise the State Championship Trophy once again.

Back to those socks...Alissa never changed or washed her socks, wore them the entire tournament, played amazing and once the season was completed presented them to me in a frame which still hangs in my athletic office.

**Congratulations to the 2012 Girls Soccer Team – Girls Soccer Team of the Decade**