



Soccer Cats

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improve and players settle into their new roles.

"It's my senior year and I'm excited about it," Zehner said. "I want us to continue to improve and be the best we can be."

As for the group of juniors, Martin sees great potential for this year and next.

"Our junior class is very strong," Martin said. "Midfielder Bradley Snyder will be counted on to score goals and to assist our forwards. Bradley is very talented and can play and be productive in every position." "Kyle Hicks is our enforcer in the midfield. He is a natural defender with very good one-on-one skills. Co-Captain Gregory Pierce, who is very skillful and hardworking, will be needed to work in attack and help in defense. Logan McCalip has good speed and works hard. He will be playing forward and outside mid, where his pace can help us on counter attacks."

Martin added that Dylan Tribble will be playing left back and has a very good left foot and a "tremendous work rate". He said Nathan Mathis and Kennedy Moore will also play expanded roles this season, as will Jacob Mitchell, who will be coming over from football.

"Nathan has worked very hard getting fit and has improved so much," Martin said. "He can help us in the midfield and scoring goals. Kennedy is quick and will continue to improve and contribute. And, Jacob is such a great athlete who makes us very dangerous on set pieces. His long throw-ins and ability to win headers will help."

Martin also expects big contributions from his underclassmen. He calls sophomore Andrew Backstrom a "very tenacious defender" who adds size to the back line and is "very good in

the air". Lawson Merritt is one of the team's most improved players and provides quickness and skill on the flanks, while fellow sophomores Rylie Turner and Orlando Polk will provide much-needed depth and compete for starting spots.

"Freshmen Oscar Whalen, Logan Husley, Ian Glynn and Aidan Tyson have all worked hard and will be good players for us moving forward," Martin added. "And, freshman Jerry Franks will be starting in goal for us. Jerry has worked hard and will be a very good keeper as he is getting better every day."

GCHS senior Noah Mitchell, a football standout who has committed to play for the U.S. Air Force Academy, is listed on the roster as a possible goalkeeper as well.

Results have been good overall for the Cats so far. Martin said he was pleased with the opening scrimmages, despite not coming out on top on the scoreboard.

"We controlled possession versus St. Stanislaus at times," he said. "Dylan Tribble, Andrew Backstrom and Alex Henderson had good performances along with very good Midfield play from Kyle Hicks, Bradley Snyder and Lawson Merritt."

"Zehner had a strong showing up top nearly scoring the first goal, but the Stanislaus keeper made a very good save. Goalkeeper Jerry Franks did very well in both games."

McCalip had a good performance against West Harris and scored the team's first goal off an assist from Snyder.

Since those opening scrimmages, the Cats are 2-1 with wins over Wesson and Forest and a loss in the home opener to a strong Resurrection squad.

"We are learning to possess the ball and got punished by a few

mistakes, but I was very pleased with our effort and attitude," Martin said. "We had a successful second weekend, winning both games in the Sumrall Tournament in Laurel. We played well, dominating possession and moving the ball in both games, but struggled to finish our chances."

"We were strong defensively all weekend. We have much to work on as the competition level will be much stronger, but we are looking forward to the challenge as these games will get us ready for region play which starts in December."

Martin also feels good with his junior varsity team, which will be made up of a high percentage of 7th and 8th graders.

"Those guys have done a tremendous job against older and bigger boys," Martin said.

"We lost to St. Andrews 0-1 and Sumrall 0-3, but the boys improved each game with standout performances from

Kade Howard in goal." "I'm excited about the potential of our boys program moving forward. We will only get

better, but it will take some time and my patience for us to develop into a state championship program."



Photo by Russell Turner / Herald Editor

Sophomore winger Lawson Merritt is shown getting possession of a loose ball during a recent scrimmage, while senior Daniel Zehner (3) and freshman Logan Husley (11) look to defend. Shown asking for a pass from Merritt is junior Dylan Tribble (17).



Photo by Russell Turner / Herald Editor

Junior midfielder Kyle Hicks (9) is shown looking to pass the ball during practice last week at GCHS. Also shown are sophomore Andrew Backstrom (28) and junior Bradley Snyder (13)



Photo by Russell Turner / Herald Editor



GCHS senior Daniel Zehner is shown (Above) leaping for a ball in the Cats' loss to Resurrection, while junior Nathan Mathis comes in to assist. Shown (Left) is junior team co-captain Gregory Pierce going after a loose ball against sophomore Andrew Backstrom



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