

# Lady Cats Soccer

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Classmate Jaden Ham transferred to GCHS last year and was an immediate impact player. If the Lady Cats are to reposition themselves as one of the top programs in 4A soccer, those four will have to lead the way. They started that process by stepping out of their comfort zones and into new positions on the field this year that Maxwell believes makes the team stronger.

"We are changing our formation to fit the style of players we have this year," Maxwell said. "We have been working hard during the summer and preseason and the attitudes have been all positive and the work ethic has been outstanding."

Strickland, who has been a consistent starter for Maxwell since the eighth grade, quarterbacked the team from her midfield position a year ago and is the leading returning scorer after posting six goals and four assists as a junior. She is making the move to center defensive back for this season and is now a dominant stopper on the Lady Cats' back line, who can also push the ball the length of the field to set up scoring opportunities when those situations present themselves.

"We have a lot of heart on this team," Strickland said. "As a senior, I feel a little more pressure to perform and lead the team, but I couldn't have asked for a better team to be a part of."

Beech and Crumpton, who have each started since their freshman seasons are moving as well. The two were defensive specialists last year, but have moved up the field to fill roles in the midfield and forward. Beech and Crumpton each have shown good scoring potential and combined for five goals and an assist as juniors. They are expected to improve on those numbers with a lot more chances this season

and will need to if their team is to reach its goals.

"The move to forward and midfielder has been exciting for me," Crumpton said. "I think the position change helps the team because it introduces more speed to our offensive attack."

Beech agreed, saying that she believes she is a better player at forward than she was as a defender and will be able to have a bigger impact on the games.

Both say the team has embraced the moves and is working hard to turn the changes into success on the pitch.

"We all work and play hard at all times and with all the skills we have on this year's team, I expect us to be much better and reach our goal of being region champions," Crumpton added.

Ham will remain on the back line, helping Strickland shore up the defense. A proven defender for the Lady Cats, Ham too has shown she has the ability to turn a defensive stop into an offensive attack due to her ball control and passing abilities.

Junior Annsley Franks and sophomore Aubrynn Shepherd will join them, giving Maxwell a strong and experienced wall in front of the goal. Ninth grader Joey Dueitt will see time in the defensive set, and despite being the youngest defender in the back, Maxwell says she is definitely strong enough to take on any player attacking the goal.

Bolstering the support in front of the goal is important after the loss of senior goal keeper Anna McDonald. Junior Brooklyn Lee has stepped into the starting role at goalkeeper. She received minimal playing time last year behind McDonald, but will be receiving all the minutes this year, according to Maxwell.

"She has been working hard all summer and I am very confident

in her athletic ability to keep the balls out of the back of our net," Maxwell said.

Up top, sophomore Rayne Williams and freshman Lisa Johnson will add a lot of speed to the Lady Cats' offensive attack. Johnson is the more experienced of the two, having notched three goals and an assist as an eighth grader. Together, Maxwell hopes her front line can be a real problem for opposing defenses to slow down.

"Eighth graders Bailey Csaszar and Anna Pridgen will be filling roles as central midfielders and we will look to them along with Zaria to help us transition quickly from defense to offense," Maxwell said. "McKenna Daley and Honesty Mcleod will be valuable substitutes and even may earn a starting position as the season moves along."

Claiming the elusive region title and a top playoff seed will not be an easy task. Poplarville, Vancleave and Stone County are off to fast starts and Forrest Co. AHS and Purvis will be challenges as well. Maxwell believes Poplarville and Stone will be the top teams to beat, but says she and her team aren't taking any opposing teams lightly.

"I do believe we can compete for a region title," Strickland said. "It won't be easy. It will have to be hard-fought, but it is definitely a possibility for us."

"Coach Janna tells us we can only control two things on the field and that's our attitude and effort. If we take care of those we can compete with anyone."

The Lady Cats started the season with a 2-0 win over St. Patrick in the opening jamboree. Johnson started the scoring on a header off a nice corner shot from Strickland. Johnson finished with an unassisted goal in the second half.



Photo by Randy Whitley Photography for the Greene County Herald

Freshman forward Lisa Johnson (11) is shown driving past a Pascagoula defender last week. Also shown involved in the play is freshman McKenna Daley. Daley and Johnson are 2-of-4 freshmen who expect to contribute alongside and experienced group of upperclassmen this year for the Lady Wildcats.

The Lady Cats followed that with a loss to West Jones and a draw against Northeast Jones in the preseason Sumrall Tournament at Laurel.

They are off to a 0-0-1 start to the regular season after playing Sumrall to a scoreless draw in the opener.

They traveled to Petal on Monday and had Perry Central on Tuesday at home. No results were available for those games.

They are set to host Wayne County on Thursday.

GOOD LUCK

Chloe

We Love You!

Love,  
Mom, Dad,  
Caleb & Corbin

Have A Great Senior Year!

9 40 17 39 32

Unity is strength...  
when there is teamwork and  
collaboration, wonderful  
things can be achieved.

- Mattie Stepanek

Good Luck

WILDCATS

We are proud of you

BRADLEY

We hope you have a  
Great SENIOR Season!

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