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## Total turnaround West Bloomfield High boys soccer has already eclipsed 2007's win total

By Mike Moore  
C & G Sports Writer

WEST BLOOMFIELD — Dennis Darnoi said it took exactly one game at the start of the 2008 season to realize his West Bloomfield High soccer team could be something special.

“After we beat (Beverly Hills Detroit) Country Day in the first game, I saw the potential for the first time,” Darnoi said of his team’s 1-0 victory in late August at the Country Day tournament. “We played so well. We played very disciplined.”

Senior Justin Dacey saw the potential even sooner.

“After the first half,” Dacey said at a recent practice. “We got to halftime tied with Country Day, and you could just see the confidence and talent we had.”

What players and coaches alike were witnessing was the official transformation of the West Bloomfield soccer program.

And the success has gone well beyond that first game.

As a matter of fact, the Lakers defeated Birmingham Seaholm 1-0 the following day and placed second in the tournament after losing to Northville High in the final.

“I don’t think we had ever done better than seventh or eighth place,” Darnoi said with a laugh. “To play back-to-back games the way we did, and then play well for a while with Northville, was pretty cool to see.”

Things haven’t changed much since those opening days. At press time, the Lakers held a 7-2 overall record — all seven wins have been shutouts — already surpassing the win total from 2007, when they finished 5-14-1.

“Things really started changing over the summer,” said Dacey. “We played a lot of soccer and in a lot of tournaments. We won most of the games we played in.”

“At the same time, this is a great group of guys who really get along,” senior midfielder Destin Simon added. “In years past, there seemed to be some problems with getting along at times. Now it’s one group with the same goal in mind.”

One of those goals is a title in the Oakland Activities Association Blue Division, which may have seemed unattainable a few weeks ago.

“I didn’t expect a start to the season like this,” Darnoi admitted. “I hoped we could be competitive and play around the .500 mark.”



Photo by Tracy Dreslinski  
West Bloomfield senior Destin Simon, left, attributed his team’s 7-2 start in part to the cohesiveness the guys have played with.

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But now that he's seen what his guys are capable of, his expectations have changed.

"I expect it now, the rest of the year," he laughed. "Things will only get tougher. The teams we play are going to get better. The stakes are going to get higher. If we can play like we have so far, we're going to keep surprising people."

Dacey and Simon even went a step further. After talking about the division title, the two agreed about the possibility of making a run in the district round of the playoffs.

"As far back as we can remember, West Bloomfield has struggled to get past that first district game," said Dacey, as Simon nodded in agreement. "To do that this year, to make it to a final or beyond, would be such a huge step for this program."

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