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Photo by Scott Drelinski

The Southfield Christian bench, along with new head coach John Devine, cheers after the team scored on a penalty kick during a Sept. 16 game with Auburn Hills Oakland Christian. Devine returned to coach at his alma mater after spending over a decade as an assistant boys varsity coach at Troy Athens.

## A new era

### Southfield Christian soccer gets new coach, new outlook

By Sue Teggart  
 C & G Sports Writer

SOUTHFIELD — Southfield Christian boys soccer is, admittedly, a work in progress. At the end of last season, former coach Brian Atkins stepped down and the nucleus of the team, the seniors, bid farewell to the program.

New coach John Devine has now taken the reins and ushered in a new era.

“This year, it’s going to be about finding out who we are, learning as much as possible during the regular season and getting ready for the postseason,” Devine said. “We’re young. I’m happy with how we’re playing, and it’s going to pay off dividends later.”

Devine’s experience, coupled with the fact that he is a 1984 Southfield Christian graduate — where he was a four-year varsity soccer player — helped compel him to take the varsity coaching position.

Prior to returning to Southfield Christian, Devine spent 13 years under the tutelage of local legend Tim Storch, the coach at Troy Athens. Devine still coaches JV girls soccer and assists Storch with the girls varsity squad at Athens.

Devine said while Athens’ program was hard to walk away from, returning to Southfield Christian was a unique opportunity that he couldn’t pass up.

“It was a difficult decision,” Devine said. “I’ve always had in my mind that (coaching) was something to come back to.”

Southfield Christian Athletic Director Tim Fracassi said Devine’s soccer sense and upstanding character made him a good fit for the position.

“He’s an alum and comes from a program that has a great winning tradition,”

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Fracassi said of Devine's time with Storch. "When he showed interest in coaching the team, we did not hesitate to bring him in. We're excited for John to implement that winning system here."

Devine said the new position has been an opportunity to set his ideas into motion.

"I've been planting the seed this year — seeing what works and what doesn't," Devine said. "Now it's on my shoulders. I realize how much Tim Storch did and how much you take on as a head coach. You're ultimately responsible."

Though he's no stranger to Southfield Christian soccer, Devine is familiarizing himself with his new surroundings.

"It's a learning experience. I'm getting to know the level of my players' abilities and the level of competition," Devine said. "I think the biggest transition is learning what it takes to be successful at this level. It's different, and we're still a work in progress."

The Eagles are on the young side, returning just three players — junior Matt Solt of Beverly Hills and seniors Justin Smith of Ferndale and Brian Nimmo of Livonia — and spent the first half of the season getting comfortable with the rigors of varsity soccer.

"Lots of younger guys are getting playing time," Devine said. "Guys that weren't involved heavily on a senior-dominated team are playing significant roles."

With plenty of soccer left to be played — the Eagles were 2-2 in the Michigan Independent Athletic Conference Red Division, 4-5 overall, at press time — Devine wants his squad to make each game count as the postseason nears.

"My expectations for these kids is to learn as much as they can by districts," Devine said. "My attitude this year is to find out as much about this team as I can ... and be ready for late October."

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