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## Tough end to a 'great season'

### Heartbreaking loss in districts takes nothing away from Lakers' season

By Mike Moore  
C & G Sports Writer

WEST BLOOMFIELD — Having some time to let it all set in, let the emotion drain a bit, certainly helped.

But still, less than a day after his team's season came to a cruel end, West Bloomfield High soccer coach Dennis Darnoi had nothing but praise for his team.

"This year was wonderful. It was a huge success," he said, as his Lakers were eliminated from Division 1 district play in a 2-1 loss to Birmingham Groves Oct. 13. Groves notched the winner with just 32 seconds remaining in regulation. "It's a disappointing end, no question about that, but this was a great season."

Asked if the loss would take anything away from the 2008 season, Darnoi just laughed and said, "absolutely not."

After finishing 2007 with a 5-14-1 overall record, the Lakers flipped the script in 2008, finishing with a 14-5-1 overall mark, 10-2 in the Oakland Activities Association Blue Division, good for second place.

So what fueled the quick turnaround?

"I asked the guys that question, and they thought the team unity was so much stronger this year compared to years past," Darnoi explained. "From my point of view, this was a group that understood what was expected of them in training. They knew they'd have to show up prepared and leave everything on the field."

Darnoi also credited his senior class, especially Jay Byer, Destin Simon, Josh Lorence and Justin Dacey, all of whom have been with him all three years of his tenure as coach. Dan Rosenthal and Christian Zora are also set to graduate.

Looking forward, Darnoi doesn't expect 2008 to be a, "flash in the pan," as he put it. The Lakers could return as many as nine players, including five starters.

"As I told the boys, 'This is new history. A new standard has been set,'" the coach said. "This is the kind of year, the kind of success, we can aim for every time."

#### In other local action:

Orchard Lake St. Mary's used overtime to sneak past Flint Kearsley 1-0 in an Oct. 13 opener of a Division 2 district. The Eaglets played Ortonville Brandon in the district semifinal after press time.



Photo by Tracy Dreslinski  
West Bloomfield senior Destin Simon, left, is one of four seniors who have been with the Lakers' varsity squad for three years. Simon helped guide West Bloomfield to 14-5-1 record, a far cry from last year's 5-14-1 mark.

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In a Division 1 district hosted by Lake Orion High, Walled Lake Northern fell to White Lake Lakeland 1-0 in the opening round.

Walled Lake Western was defeated by Pinckney High 3-2, and Walled Lake Central was ousted by Brighton High 2-1 in the Division 1 district host by Northville High. Both games were in the opening round.

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