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Photo by Tracy Dreslinski

Troy Athens sophomore Joe Kemp tries to get past a Warren De La Salle defender April 23 at Athens. The Red Hawks won 9-5. Athens next takes on University of Detroit Jesuit at 7 p.m. May 1 at home.

Nothing but net

Troy Athens boys lacrosse dominating in victories

By Christian Davis
C & G Sports Writer

TROY — When the Troy Athens boys lacrosse team has won this season, it leaves no doubt as to which was the better team.

The Red Hawks were 5-2 at press time. Their average margin of victory in those four wins is over 12 goals.

Athens' two losses — both to teams from Pennsylvania — came by a total of three goals.

"I think the first couple of games I was surprised, because I didn't think we were as prepared as we needed to be," Athens coach Nick Stensen said April 22 of the margins of victory. "Once I saw us play on the field in a game situation, I realized what potential this team has. I guess in a sense, I underestimated them a little bit."

Stensen is sure not to do that again.

"We're going to shoot for a state championship; I think it's realistic," he said. "I think we should be able to get over the hump of the last eight years, where we haven't played in a state final."

The "hump" the coach refers to is the Division 1 semifinals, where the Red Hawks have fallen the last eight seasons.

This version of the Red Hawks has banked on its defense and a ball-control offense.

"When we control the ball, they can't score goals," Stensen said, as Athens have given up just 12 goals in its five wins.

"But ... our defensive unit, they've been great this year. Our goalie (senior John LaRose) has really stood on his head, too. He was our backup last year and really

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stepped up in position this year. He's been phenomenal."

LaRose even credited the defense for making his job easier.

"We don't have a lot of big-named guys, but as a team, we play really well," he said. "Our defense as a whole is doing really well this year. I'm not surprised."

LaRose, senior John DeMaggio, junior Matt Lining, and sophomores Joe Kemp and Dan Kreza form the nucleus of the squad.

"We rely on them the most to keep the team together and be the glue," Stensen said. "They work hard and lead by example."

The coach added that the squad needs to shore up its chemistry on the field. Once it does that, he believes the Red Hawks will have their long-awaited state-final shot.

"I don't think this team is going to have a ceiling," he said.

Catch Athens when it hosts the University of Detroit Jesuit at 7 p.m. May 1.

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