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Young and building for the future

With just one senior on the roster, WB is constructing base for years to come

By Mike Moore
 C & G Sports Writer

WEST BLOOMFIELD — There was an unmistakable confidence about her as she made the walk from the parking lot to the dugout.

A quick laugh with a friend was followed by an equally quick “hello” to a fellow coach. Moments later, she was instructing one of her pitchers about warm ups.

Kristen Socha may be the skipper of a 6-14 West Bloomfield High softball team, but she knows that given time, training and little seasoning, this is a group that could be very special.

“Right now, we’re dealing with a lot of youth,” she said, partly explaining her team’s record. “We’re definitely in a rebuilding mode right now. But given time, I think this is a group that has some wins in it down the road.”

The youth Socha spoke of includes a roster with just one senior in Laura Ebert and six freshmen, four of whom start on a regular basis. And while she maintains that a .500 record is “the hope” for the season, she also expected the 6-14 overall mark to be better, despite the youth movement.

“If our No. 1 pitcher hadn’t gotten hurt, I’m positive we’d have a few more wins than we do,” Socha said.

But right now, wins and losses aren’t exactly what the Lakers are concerned about. Instead, the girls have their focus directed on day-to-day activities — improving from one practice to the next and being competitive each time they set foot on the field.

“It’s all a learning experience right now,” said junior Jennifer Topor, the team’s No. 1 pitcher who has seen very little action in the circle.

“There’s a lot of teaching on a daily basis,” said junior catcher Rachel Height-Kaplan. “At the same time, there is so much potential with this group. We’re going to be good.”

It’s that concept that keeps the Lakers going, and really, keeps them so confident.

The potential is certainly there for the rest of this season, but Socha believes the makings for some excellent teams down the road isn’t just a possibility, it’s just a matter of time.



Photo by Tracy Dreslinski
 With just one senior on the roster, freshmen, including pitcher Jackie Pyles, have played a major role for the Lakers this season.

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“We have girls that are 14 and 15 in our starting lineup going up against girls that are 18 and playing for some of the best softball teams in the state,” the coach said. “Of course there are going to be struggles, and of course not everything is going to go as smoothly as we’d like.

“But they’ve kept a good head on their shoulders and have done real well so far.”

Socha explained her belief in having fun while staying focused, and her players seemed to act it out as they prepared for their May 11 game at home against Troy Athens.

At the same time, that confidence and swagger Socha carries has certainly rubbed off on the girls.

When asked about the future, as in the rest of this season, the goals stated were anything but modest.

“We want to continue playing competitive softball, but at the same time, we want to do more than just that,” sophomore infielder Lindsay Gill said. “We’re in a good district, but it’s one we feel we have a chance at. That’s what we’ve been working toward, the idea of playing our best late in the season. We’re ready to prove to people that this is a very good softball team.”
And it could be for years.

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