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Photo by Tracy Dreslinski
 Birmingham Seaholm No. 2 singles junior Katie Frazier returns a forehand during a tournament earlier this season. The Maples are packing their bags for the Division 2 state final at Kalamazoo College, which gets under way May 29.

Staying sharp Young Seaholm girls tennis squad looks to maintain top performance at state final

By Sue Teggart
 C & G Sports Writer

In the last 10 seasons, the Birmingham Seaholm girls tennis team has finished inside the top 5 at the Division 2 girls tennis state finals.

Most recently, the Maples finished second (2005 and 2006), fourth in 2008 and won the D-2 title in 2004.

If history tells us anything, the Maples are on track for another top performance when they travel to Kalamazoo College May 29 to compete for the D-2 championship.

“I never put a ceiling on what my players can accomplish,” Seaholm coach Keith Bernacki said about his state-finals aspirations. “I try to just get them focused.”

After staging a second-place finish at the May 14 D-2 regional, which the Maples hosted, Bernacki said despite the narrow loss to champion Bloomfield Hills Marian (26 points), a competitive regional is good preparation for the loaded state final.

“I think the more you can put your girls in a situation where they’re going to feel the competition and the pressure, they’re more likely to be accustomed to it when they see it at the state final,” Bernacki said. “For such a young team like we have at Seaholm, I want to give these girls as much competitive experience as possible before the state final.”

Seaholm’s lone regional flight winner was its No. 1 doubles team of senior Chelsea Donlin and Caitlin Miller.

Donlin was also part of the No. 1 doubles team that won a state championship in its flight in 2008.

Although Marian topped Seaholm by only two points in regional play, Bernacki said

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it was Marian's poise under pressure that delivered the victory.

Bernacki said in the week leading into the finals, his team would do just that, working on the mental side of playing big matches.

"I think we're just trying to get our girls to be more comfortable in a competitive situation rather than get nervous," Bernacki said. "We want them to respond in a competitive way."

"We've seen most of the hi-level D-2 teams out there," Bernacki added. "I keep telling my girls that there's not a team out there that we can't compete with. We just have to make sure we're playing our best tennis next weekend."

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