

## Lexington hopes to continue charge

By Mike Farrell / Boys Soccer | Sunday, September 16, 2007 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | [Other High School](#)

There is one problematic issue raised by nearly every Eastern Massachusetts coach who commented about the challenges of their upcoming 2007 season.

"We lost some talented players" is a sentiment echoed by coaches every season, but it's the ones who can replace the irreplaceable who preside over title-contending programs.

Take coach Dan Rudolph of Lexington. Since leading the program to its first Middlesex League title in 20 years in 2005, Rudolph has said goodbye to all-star dynamos such as Willie Ballenthin, Bryan Longo and Eric Driscoll.

Still, the Minutemen have marched into the Division 1 North semifinals (2005, lost to Acton-Boxboro) and final (last year, lost to St. John's Prep) with reconfigured teams that, instead of crying about lost talent, battled and scraped to improve upon the previous year's finish.

"That's the thing about Lexington," said Rudolph. "We always have great players ready to come up."

With only four returning starters on a team stacked with hungry bench players and junior varsity promotions, Rudolph will be depending on a green group to lead the Minutemen (19-3 in 2006).

In his third year on varsity, junior Diego Garcia is the most sage of a captainship consisting of midfielder Mike Hibbard, defenseman Brendan Magauran, and goalie Zach Abdu-Glass. Combined with the talents of JV call-up Max Swanson, these Minutemen hope to bring their program past Middlesex foes such as Woburn and Stoneham and to the state title threshold.

To get there, they'll have to get past nemesis Acton-Boxboro (17-3-1), a team they bounced 1-0 in a memorable sectional semifinal last season. A-B's success may hinge on how well the Colonials replace the offensive prowess of graduated senior Steve Rose (now at Seton Hall). Though an army of the able will be expected to kick in, the biggest ante needs to come from the cleats of senior midfielder Jay Hayward.

Fighting off the 2006 Dual County League co-champs will be sectional semifinalist Lincoln-Sudbury and Concord-Carlisle, last year's Division 2 state champion. Sixth-year Patriots [team stats] coach Ray Pavlik brings a competitive team into the fray this season, but he has no intention of following last year's blueprint to find this year's title.

"We're not going to play the same style as we did last year," said Pavlik. "You can't emulate the way we played last season, so we're gonna have to work even harder."

Putting on those hard hats for the Patriots will be a trio of top-flight seniors: forward Mike Burke, defenseman Ryan Miller and midfielder Theo Terris. Their presence will attempt to mitigate the loss of eight starters from a state title team that finished 18-2-3. If C-C hopes to repeat at the top of Division 2, they'll have to get past such intimidating foes as North Andover, Stoneham and Masconomet.

In the Catholic Conference, last year's Div. 1 state champion St. John's Prep shows no signs of slowing down. Despite losing leaders Jeff Dell'Orfano, Tim Prior and Ben Slingerland, the Eagles will field a squad eager to continue the excellence of their departed predecessors. If midfielder Hunter Clark can come back from an offseason ACL injury, Cinderella Catholic Memorial will trudge toward another Div. 1 South championship.

In the Bay State Conference, Weymouth will combat its own senior exodus by running captains Kyle Cronin and Tyler Oakes at the daunting talent of conference favorite, Framingham. Sectional finalist Needham figures to have a say in the proceedings.

Hanover coach Jim Sylvia lost some bodies from last season, but the 24-year veteran has a stingy defense and senior leadership to catalyze a team ready for a run at not only a Patriot League title, but Div. 3 state hardware.

Seniors Peter Fanning, Evan Stannard and Chris DeCristofaro will join junior Chad Merritt to form an impenetrable defensive wall in front of senior netminder Jake Smock. With their desired offensive output from captains Timmy Hurlburt and Trevor Griffin, the Indians (17-1-1) will try to hold off the scoring prowess of Fredrico Kelly and Hingham, along with formidable lineups in Duxbury, Medway and Silver Lake.

On their way to the top of Div. 3, they'll have to thwart Woburn, Lynnfield, and the offensive artistry of Norwell's Colin Henry, last year's South Shore League MVP.

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