

March 25, 2025

By Dennis Garcia
SportsTone.net

ASHEBORO - How quickly a high school team can gel will often tell how successful that team can be. Combining experienced players with talented underclassmen can sometimes lead to resentment, personnel questions and even jealousy. The Asheboro High School girls soccer team has avoided these pitfalls as a strong group of juniors and freshmen have blended quite well with the seniors and the result is a 6-2 record heading into action this week.



*Asheboro's women's soccer team.
Photos provided.*

"We had a large junior class coming back and I was really excited to see how the team bonded and gelled together with so many returning juniors," said Emily Ramon, who is in her seventh season at the helm of the Blue Comets. "We also had a handful of newcomers who I knew would make an immediate impact. It's exciting. We're looking at a lot of potential."

The Blue Comets are seeing that potential realized early on in a number of areas. The leadership of the trio of captains - seniors Karen Cox and Emma Julian and junior Penny Smith - the solid play of that junior class and the emergence of freshmen such as Anson Frazier, Grace Bigelow, Merlin Valencia Melgar and Kimrey Watts, have given Asheboro quite a lot to look forward to as they prepare for what is sure to be a grueling Mid-Piedmont Conference season.



Karen Cox.

"As long as we can keep everyone healthy, we are on the right track," Ramon said.

Injuries have already played a factor as Cox is returning after suffering a torn ACL last March. The season opener against Southwestern Randolph was the first action she's seen on a soccer field in nearly a year.

"Mentally, it was quite tough," Cox said of returning after rehab. "I have to be positive about it. The biggest supporter was my dad."

Cox said she's at about 90 percent right now, but one area that has been 100 percent is the Blue Comets' defense. AHS has always had a strong defense. Through the first eight games in the past four seasons, AHS has surrendered just 10, 15, 21 and 10 goals. This year, the Blue Comets have bettered that number as they have given up just five goals all season.

"We have some excellent new players who have come in with the dynamics from last year, we've been able to grow," said Julian, who along with freshman Kimrey Watts, sophomore Alexis Bautista, junior Chloe Chanmaly and freshman Merlin Valencia Melgar lead the defensive effort. "They know how to shift and communicate. Been playing so long together and they know what to do."

Goalie Emma Little, who has already recorded four shutouts, has also been key.

The Asheboro City Football Club, which came into existence just a few years ago, is a place many of the current Blue Comets have honed their skills. Players have competed in other clubs as well.

"I feel the majority of us having been playing club together," Cox said when asked about the togetherness of the team. "Working with each other outside of the season. We get together and it just clicks. We know where other people are going to be."

The Blue Comets' offense is led by Jaira Arellano, a junior who has tallied 12 goals.



Penny Smith.



"Jaira has good field vision when she has the ball," Ramon said. "She's quick and she's shifty. What makes her so successful is the connection she has with the other strikers Gigi Flores, Penny Smith and Chloe Chanmaly."

Smith, Frazier and Bigelow have all scored twice so far this year as a total of 10 players have scored goals and nine have recorded assists. The Blue Comets could get even stronger as standout center-mid Abeni Hernandez works her way back after suffering a broken foot last fall with the ACFC.

The MPC season begins March 31 and Ramon said North Davidson, which went unbeaten in league play last year, Ledford, along with Oak Grove, Central Davidson and

perhaps a surprising Montgomery Central team all pose problems.

"We had a good mix of challenging games and games in which I could get playing time for everyone," Ramon said. "Everyone has a role on this team and that might be different every game. Everyone from the bench to the starting 11 is necessary."

That message seems to be coming through.