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TRINITY - When Maggie Messner stepped onto the soccer field for the first time at Wheatmore High School, she came in as a freshman who had always lit up the scoreboard on the offensive end.

But coach Rick Maness needed a player who could attack from the back line, so he moved her to defense. That is one of the moves that helped the Warriors to a state championship in 2022, a state runner-up finish in 2023 and a regional finals appearance in 2024.

Messner acclimated so well to the back line, she was named to the NCCA East-West All-Star Game, where she will represent the West in the game on July 16 at Grimsley High School's Jamieson Stadium.



*Wheatmore senior Maggie Messner.  
Photo provided.*

"I'm very excited to represent my team," Messner said after scoring three goals, recording eight assists and helping limit opponents to just 35 goals in 22 games this past season. "We made it very far. This is another thing on top of that. I'm excited."

Messner said it didn't take long for her to see the importance of defense.

"Initially, I was kind of, not upset, but shocked," Messner said of her change to the back line for her first season. "I had played offense all the years I have ever played soccer. After talking to Rick and having his guidance and the help of the seniors playing defense, I loved it. I like it better than offense. We have shown we can score a bunch of goals, but you need defense. We haven't let in a lot of goals. You can't have all those crazy records we have and not have a defense."

Maness said Messner was a perfect candidate to switch to defense.

"We needed a defender who could attack from the back line so we put her back there," Maness said. She has a lot of soccer IQ. What she may lack in one thing, she makes up for with in IQ. She has become a solid defender."

Messner is heading to Appalachian State, but will not play soccer for the Mountaineers. She said she will instead play club or intramural ball while working for a degree in sports broadcasting and journalism.

Before that, however, she will be staring right into some of the top offensive talent there is in the state of North Carolina.

"It's a little nerve wracking, scary," Messner said of facing such a high caliber of talent. "In my conference, we really haven't had that kind of competition. But I have had that by playing against Ellie (Garrison), Natalie (Bowman) and Summer (Bowman). I'm proud of getting to this level."

Maness said Garrison, the all-time leading scorer in NCHSAA history who is playing for ASU in the fall, declined an invitation to play in the East-West Game, citing she will already be in summer workouts at ASU.