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Photo by Patricia O'Blenes
The Auburn Hills Avondale soccer team comes together before the start of the second half May 31 in the Division 2 district semifinal against Bloomfield Hills Lahser. The host Yellow Jackets lost, 1-0.

Perfect blend

Avondale mixes youth with leadership for championship recipe

By Christian Davis
C & G Sports Writer

AVONDALE — Auburn Hills Avondale coach Dave Muczynski sat by himself about an hour before his host Yellow Jackets were to meet with Fenton High in the Division 2 district opener May 29.

“The calm before the storm,” he said.

This season was anything but turbulent for the Yellow Jackets.

The Yellow Jackets finished 14-4-4 overall and won their third straight Oakland Activities Association championship.

The first two titles came in OAA D-III; this season, the team moved to D-II and still proved to be the best, posting a 7-0-3 record.

Muczynski said this season’s success came from the leadership of his seniors and the talent of his underclassmen — freshmen Kayla Mannino and Bree Dobbins, and sophomore Megan Siebert — who play in the Olympic Development Program.

“When you have that sort of talent just walking in the door, you know that you’re strong in a couple of places,” Muczynski said. “It makes it a little easier as a coach.”

Throw in the talents of junior Kim Siebert — who committed to play at the University of Michigan — and senior Kristen Mannino, who will play for University of Detroit Mercy next year, and you have a team with the firepower to go unblemished in the division.

“Coach kept telling us we have the team to make it happen,” senior captain Sarah Whitefield said. “We worked for it the whole season.”

Muczynski added that without the leadership from senior the captains, Whitefield, Melissa Damico and Ana Karavias, the accomplishments of this season could have never been reached.

“In terms of leadership, just knowing anytime they walked on the field they were giving 100 percent,” the coach said. “Their attitudes were always positive.”

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"We all work really well together," Karavias said. "We were a positive team and out to have fun."

Muczynski said often what happens when seniors start missing playing time due to the efforts of some underclassmen is that there is an erosive chemistry, but that wasn't ever an issue with this team.

In fact, the example the upperclassmen set influenced the whole team.

"When they saw the seniors fall in line, (they understood) that each person has a role," Muczynski said. "Their role is whenever they get on the field, they have to give 100 percent."

With the expected return of 10 underclassmen next season, the Yellow Jackets now have their sights on becoming one of the top programs in the state.

"It's an exciting time for us," Muczynski said. "The future is going to be good."

Avondale went on to beat Fenton, 4-0, but fell to Bloomfield Hills Lahser, 1-0, at home to end its season May 31.

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