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## West's side rising

By Peter Richins  
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### BOYS' SOCCER NOTES

Things are looking up for the West High School boys' soccer team.

After years of mediocre results, the Panthers failed to qualify for the state tournament last year when they fell two points short on the last day of league play. But an influx of talented freshmen, said coach **Kris Hamlet**, will keep the team strong for several years.

"This is the best freshman class I've ever seen," Hamlet said. "We're on the up-and-up right now; we've got a good future."

Hamlet could see the difference right away.

"We've had to make some significant cuts at tryouts and not just keep everybody that shows up," Hamlet said. Hamlet can't explain West's improving prospects, but he's not complaining.

"We have a lot more players that want to play for their high school teams, instead of just playing for their league teams," Hamlet said. "Everybody wanted to play for a winner, and no one wanted to come here and make this team into a winner. But now, we're seeing that."

Freshmen who should see a number of starts this year include **Carlos Cruz**, **Elias Galvan**, **Timmy Berggren** and **Jose Segura**.

The Panthers have nine returning varsity players; they list eight seniors on the roster, six of whom have started for two years.

Perhaps the Panthers' best upperclassman is **Tobin Bennion**, a senior who earned the Region 5 Defensive Most Valuable Player award last season. He also was a first-team *Tribune* all-state honoree.

West started the season with mixed results against ranked teams; Hamlet expects the Panthers will benefit from the tough early-season schedule.

"We've had a tough start to it, but it'll help us towards the end of the schedule when we push into the playoffs," Hamlet said.

### Judge Memorial

The last time the Bulldogs beat Park City was in 2003; this season's seniors were all freshmen that year.

So when Judge Memorial earned a 1-0 victory over the Miners early in the season, the team knew it had something special this year.

"Certainly, the win against Park City gave us a boost of confidence," coach **Michael Gillis** said. He has seen the

evidence in more recent games, like the Bulldogs' come-from-behind victory over Uintah.

"I don't think that would have happened last year," Gillis said. "We have a battling mentality."

Perhaps Judge's best player is goalkeeper **Aaron Rokeach**, who earned the shutout against Park City and also has recorded two assists. Senior **Jason Heckle** also is playing well in the forward/midfielder role.

"He's an excellent attacker, off the dribble or crossing passes," Gillis said. "He's also a cross country runner, so he doesn't get tired; he can go the full game."

**John Hawkins**, younger brother of former Bulldog standouts **Annie** and **Sarah Hawkins**, the twins that played at Gonzaga, is one of Judge's best defenders.

"Some of the kids on the team call him the brick wall," Gillis said.

## Rowland Hall

Rowland Hall is accustomed to finishing regular-season play in the top half of the standings, and regularly qualifying for the playoffs.

So, after a 1-5 start to the season, things did not look good for the Winged Lions.

"I'm hoping that in the second half of the season, we'll see a little bit of a different team," coach **Bobby Kennedy** said. He stills hopes Rowland Hall can qualify for the playoffs.

"That's still a goal of ours, but that's going to be pretty challenging," Kennedy said. The reason for the Winged Lions' slow start is two-fold.

"Some of our kids didn't come back in shape or prepared to meet the demands of the game," Kennedy said. "They didn't pay the price before the season started."

In addition, Rowland Hall has several young players. In the season opener against Morgan, Kennedy started four freshmen.

"The pace of play and the physical nature of the game overwhelmed them a little bit," Kennedy said. However, "They are improving."

Kennedy has seen things turn around on defense. He credits the efforts of junior sweeper **Alex Gardner**, junior centerback **Chris Everest** and senior outside-back **Joe Accetura** for the improvement.

"Those three are really a steady backfield," Kennedy said. "They really are starting to benefit from playing together; there is a little more communication and a little more chemistry."

Through the end of the season, Kennedy hopes the Winged Lions can play better possession-style soccer. The team has enough distributing midfielders to accomplish it, he said.

"Hopefully I can challenge them to compete and go out there and play with some pride," Kennedy said. Other teams, he said, might be better, "but that doesn't preclude us from working hard."

## Farmers start fast

After years of disappointing soccer seasons, the Granite Farmers started the season with a 5-2-1 overall record and were sitting in third place in Region 8.

Too bad they could not have seen these results earlier. With Granite dropping out of all high school sports competition next year, this year's team of talented underclassmen will never have the chance to gel.

"There's a lot of good players and a lot of good skill," coach **Jared Reynolds** said. "They won't be together again; it's too bad, because they might be real good later on."

To be sure, the Farmers are benefiting from an influx of new faces. This year's players don't know the team's dismal history, and therefore have higher expectations of themselves.

Reynolds said the team's standout players include **Andersen Ferizaj**, **Assane Niang**, **Angel Perez**, **Paul Carranza** and freshmen **Ever Garcia** and **Angel Pineda**. But the Farmers may struggle against larger teams.

"We're small and more skill-oriented," Reynolds said. "It could just be that they are young."