

Boys Soccer: Warrior Run's George named Player of the Year

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By Jon Gerardi

TURBOTVILLE—Early in the season, during a downpour in Turbotville, Warrior Run senior Elias George was passed the ball about six yards from the goal. George, with his back to a Shikellamy defender, stood still a few moments with the ball in front of him. Then, in a split-second, the senior turned and rifled a shot to the far post that was perfectly placed for a goal.

That sequence was essentially a microcosm of George's senior year: success with sheer talent and athleticism.

No matter what defenses tried to stop him, George found a way around them. Despite being a constant focal point of attention, George still ran away with the Valley scoring title.

His efforts on the pitch not only helped Warrior Run appear in its first District 4 championship game since 2006, but also earned him The Daily Item's Boy's Soccer Player of the Year honor for 2013.

George, the son of Bill and Beth, is the first Warrior Run player on the boys' side to earn the award.

"I think it's a really great award to get and I'm thankful I got it," George said. "We've had so many great players and I've just been fortunate enough to be chosen to represent the school, and it's a great honor."

It's an honor more than deserved as well.

George found the back of the net 35 times this season—14 more times than the next best scorer in area—while also dishing out 12 assists, third-best in the Valley. That's even more impressive knowing defenses targeted him every game.

"He's a very determined athlete, and ... if you know you're going to be the center of attention from your opponents, you certainly need to be patient. The determination to really take advantage of whatever opportunity you have is something you need to be patient about, and that was Elias," Warrior Run coach Doug Bastian said. "Just an excellent example of being patient in spite of a lot of single-person, double-teaming, marking (and) shadowing that he was obviously getting from the opposing teams."



Warrior Run senior Elias George dribbles against a Shikellamy defender earlier this year in Turbotville. George was named The Daily Item's Boys Soccer Player of the Year. Amanda August/The Daily Item

George received other honors and awards during his senior year as well, including being named to the first team Heartland Athletic Conference-Division II all-stars and earning an all-state nomination.

"The main thing I attribute to most of my success is speed on the ball and just non-stop hustling and giving it your all," George said. "The speed on the ball helps, but if you can't get to the ball, there's no point in having the speed."

Coming into his senior year, George had 67 career goals and was just six away from tying the all-time Warrior Run mark. But George had his eyes set on a larger goal: the century club.

While 33 goals was a lofty target (and nine more that he scored in 2013), the Warrior Run senior made it look all but easy. You could count on one hand how many games George was held without one this season.

George hit the 100-goal mark during a win in the regular-season finale over Jersey Shore and ended his career with 102, shattering the previous record of 73.

"I couldn't even imagine a better senior season," George said. "Team-wise, I don't think we reached the District 4 final in many years and even as a team after great year (in 2012, going 18-0 in regular season) to do even better this year it really was great, especially from individual and team aspect."

From a team aspect, George wasn't just a go-to player offensively, but an all-around team leader that helped Warrior Run succeed.

"He's really the leader both in practice and during games. He's just competitive in practices as he is in games, so he's really, really pushing not just himself, but more importantly, his teammates to really work hard and challenge themselves to be better players and that starts in practice. That's what Elias is all about," Bastian said.

Coach of the Year

Shikellamy's Jon Steese came off a disappointing 2-16 season in his first year as head coach and many probably were expecting a sub-par season in 2013.

Steese silenced any critics as he turned the Braves around, coaching Shikellamy to an 11-7-2 overall record and a District 4 Class AA quarterfinals berth.

That turnaround season made Steese The Daily Item's Coach of the Year.

It was the Braves' first postseason appearance since 2009, and the team also posted a program-record 11 shut-outs on the season.

Steese is the first Shikellamy coach to win the honor since Kurt Mayer in 2005.