

Familiar territory for Lady Defenders

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by Jon Gerardi

Once that horn went off at the Balls Mills Soccer Complex on Monday evening, the Warrior Run players all jumped and cheered with one another at about midfield.

You could say it was a bit of redemption. After getting upset last year by Danville in the District 4 Class AA quarterfinals, the Defenders definitely didn't want a repeat of 2012 to happen this season.

Now, Warrior Run is once again in the District 4 championship game.

It's all familiar territory for Jen Allen.

The Defenders have been to the championship game twice under Allen's reign as head coach since she took over for Kathy Hillard in 2009, and each time they've reached the final under Allen, they've gone on to hoist a PIAA state trophy.

No one on Warrior Run is looking that far down the road though, and no one's assuming anything's a given, either. In fact, you can bet that Allen has her team focused solely on the team at hand today.

The Defenders are up against Montoursville, a team they last faced in the postseason in 2009 when the Warriors topped the Defenders in the Class AA quarterfinals. Only the Class AA champion advances to the PIAA state tournament.

And it may be a bit odd to think of a team that's currently 14-5-1 and just two years removed from a second straight PIAA state title as an "underdog," but coming into this season, that's how some felt at Warrior Run.

"What we kept saying this whole year (is that) we came in as underdogs. Right now, I still believe we're underdogs. We haven't proved as much as we can yet," Warrior Run sophomore Olivia George said after Monday's 4-0 win over Athens. "So I think right now, we're just showing people what we got and people still haven't seen it all. I think last year we didn't show it and we're just continuing on from last year."

It'll be a tough task, but Warrior Run will look to capture that first District 4 title since 1999 today against the Warriors, a team that was all-around solid in their 4-1 win over Shikellamy in Monday's semifinals.

"They're a good program that's done very well over the past few years. We haven't seen them this year. I'm excited for it," Montoursville coach Adam Scheibeler said after Monday's win over Shikellamy about the Defenders. "I've been telling the girls: come out and enjoy it. It'll be the same message (today). You get the opportunity to play in a district final, not many people have that, ... It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience to be a part of a high school soccer team and have a chance of winning something."

Warrior Run has the stingiest defense in the Valley in District 4, giving up just eight goals thus far through 20 games, but the Defenders' defense will have a tough test in the 1-2 combination of junior Carly Mill and junior Kirsten O'Malley.



LOOKING TO END THE DROUGHT: The District 4 Class AA boys championship game is more than an intriguing one since both Danville and Warrior Run are looking to snap a streak.

It's been 10 long years since the Danville boys soccer team hoisted the District 4 championship, and for Warrior Run, the drought is nearly as long: nine years, since 2004.

One of those streaks will come to an end tonight, however, as the two square off for the championship at Central Columbia at 7 p.m.

Only the champion in Class AA advances to the PIAA state tournament.

On the girls side, there's also a bit of a drought that Southern Columbia is hoping to end.

The Tigers haven't won a District 4 championship since 2002 and, for the 11 seniors listed on the roster—including scoring threats Bailey Bzdak and Mackenzie Clark—they want to end that streak tonight too.

Southern looks to top Millville at Balls Mills at 5 p.m., a team they defeated in the regular season, 5-1.



Warrior Run senior Chloe Eisenhuth, right, will be playing in her third District 4 championship game today. She played in both the 2011 and 2010 Class A championships.