

the  stentorian

vol. XXVII, issue 3

the north carolina school of science and mathematics

december 2006

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Midfielder Steven Schlaefer leaps to win a header in the Regional Semifinals against the Manteo Redskins. The Unicorns defeated Manteo 5-1 on Nov. 8 to advance to the State Semifinals where they lost 3-2 in overtime to Dixon High School.

Photo by Daryl Law

## Unicorns snag 2 titles, dominate 1A competition

BY NANCY YANG

Athletes topped off a successful fall season with history-making runs in this year's 1A state playoffs.

"This is the best group that I have ever coached," said Richard Gallagher, men's soccer coach.

Such ambition was the key to victory this year in the state playoffs. The men's cross country team snatched the first NCHSAA title in 17 years, running one of the fastest cumulative times in the 1A division ever recorded, with four runners placing in the top eight. Juniors Liana Roux and Amy Bahr took home the NCHSAA 1A Women's Tennis Doubles State Championship.

From the get-go, the athletes and coaches dreamed of the state title.

"We were aiming for [the title] all season," said senior Ishita Gandhi, co-captain of the women's

volleyball team, which advanced to the third round for the first time in 10 years, "We had a very focused vision for the state playoffs, [but] we took it step by step."

At each step, athletes trained harder, focused more and competed relentlessly through overtimes, five set games, the final 100-yard dash and any and all other obstacles that presented themselves along the way.

"The team buckled down and was serious about working hard and making sure [the team] pushed itself to perform its best," said Davene Mainwaring, women's volleyball coach. "Being in the state tournament was an honor not every team gets to experience, [so] we realized what was at stake with every game and made sure each game would not be our last. The [team] showed a lot of heart and never gave up."

Every soccer player "put [his] heart and soul into the team," according to co-captain, senior Steven Schlaefer.

The men's soccer team barely missed the championship game, losing in overtime in the semifinals.

In the fifth game of the "nail-biting" second round volleyball match against Mount Airy High "everyone [on the team] was exhausted and it just seemed that we were scared," Gandhi said.

In the final serves, the team was down 14-12, but dug deep and won, 16-14.

"It was one of the biggest rushes I've ever felt in my life," Gandhi said. "I remember crying after that game, but I wouldn't trade any of it."

Teamwork and unity, on top of everything else, led to a successful state playoffs, with some state championship titles and newfound reputations as competitors.

"[NCSSM athletes] are not just a bunch of nerds," Schlaefer said. "They are athletes who can and will compete on a statewide level."

Don't  
miss:

Rule 4:  
No pelvic thrusting  
page 2

Deadline: seniors focus on  
submitting college apps

page 4

Deck the halls  
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