

Student Athletes Look Forward to Another Winning Season

By **CLAIRE YIN**

With fall comes chilly weather, warm colored landscapes, and the excitement of many sports. Several NCSSM teams excelled last year, and many show promise for this upcoming season.

Expectations will be high for some teams this season. Last year, the competitive cheerleading team placed first at the NCHSAA Invitational and were named state champions. They accomplished this through collaboration and hard work, even without a coach.

Their dedication last year will likely bring them far once again this year. Returning senior Ayanna Webster expresses her enthusiasm for the upcoming season: "Last year, hearing our school's name called as champions was an unbelievable experience. I look forward to bringing even more excitement to our squad this year."

The cross country team faces similar pressure. The team ranked first in the conference last year, with the men's team winning the state 2A championship for the third year in a row. Led by Coach Charlie Payne, the team is known for its welcoming, devoted members who constantly push each other towards improvement.

As they have shown immense talent for several years, there is no doubt that this trend of domination will continue, especially with the many returning seniors. According to senior Skanda Sastry, "last year, [team members] were all really focused on running and our team dynamic struggled early on. This year, as a captain, [I want] to pay special attention to the team atmosphere, as well as the success of the team."

Hopes are also high for the men's soccer team, led by Coach Joe Shields, which was undefeated in its conference.



Last year's Men's Cross Country team takes first place at the NCHSAA 2A State Championship.

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The team entered the playoffs as ninth overall in the state and a four-seed, but this unlucky seeding led to an unfortunate loss in the first round to Croatan High School, a 28-seed that was ranked seventh in the state. Going into overtime, the game was a nail-biter that showcased our team's incredible perseverance and eclectic skills. Many returning seniors show optimism for this coming season. D Conner Borkowski, a returning senior, says that "[team members] need to fill some spots from last year, but there are high hopes and goals from everybody." Their first home game will be on September 12 against Southern Vance.

The women's tennis team, consisting of a varsity and a developmental team, showed extreme dedication, and continued to exhibit their talents last year. Coach Robert McClenny occasionally held practices

at Whippoorwill, a park approximately seven minutes away from the school, in order to have more courts and more practice. Although the team's success next year will depend on the quality of the incoming juniors, returning senior Lizzy Yang is confident that the team will be just as successful, as they "[have] dominated [their] conference for a while now."

Last year, women's golf finished their season successfully. However, as about half of the team graduated last year, they will require consistent passion in order to continue developing. Returning senior Claudia Sisk does not believe that the team's loss of members will inhibit success. "Even though we lost a lot of seniors, our team still has a lot of talent and is determined to be a competitive force in our conference this season," commented Sisk.

Under Coach Davene Mainwaring, the women's

volleyball team expects to see improvement from the previous season. Returning senior Louise Batta believes that "this year of volleyball is shaping up to be a really great year; [the team has] a lot of great talent and finally...a setter!" This year may just be the breakout year for the diligent athletes. The team's first home game will be held against Durham Academy on

August 24.

While lots of students participate in fall sports, others still support the teams in other ways. Uni-Fans is a student-run group dedicated to attending games and cheering on fellow classmates. With almost 100 members in their Facebook group, the Uni-Fans truly epitomize the school spirit characteristic to our student body.



NCSSM ATHLETICS

Members of last year's Women's Tennis team celebrate their regional championship.



CELESTE McFARLANE

With Ayanna Webster on top, the NCSSM Competition Cheerleading team takes first place at last season's NCHSAA State Championship.

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