

# High Schoolers Getting Kick Out Of Soccer Program

BY DOUG RUTTER

Brunswick County high school student athletes are getting their kicks and using their heads like never before.

The introduction of soccer into the high school sports scene this fall has met with great success, according to coaches and school officials.

"There seems to be a lot of excitement among the students and parents," said Brunswick County Schools Athletic Director Nelson Best. "I'm seeing a lot of positive reactions in the stands."

Although it started two years ago in the middle schools, this is the first season for soccer in the high schools. South hosted North in the county's first high school soccer game Sept. 19.

For the inaugural season, each county high school scheduled four games against each of the other two schools.

Since the high schools don't have soccer fields, the teams have been playing all of their games off campus.

West plays its home games at Shallotte Middle School, South plays at Smithfield Park and North plays at Northwest Park.

Best said each of the high schools is fortunate to have good, quality coaching, including North Brunswick's Keith Moore, who also coaches baseball.

Kevin Jones, who played soccer for 17 years and has five years experience coaching in recreation leagues, is leading the West Brunswick Trojans.

Jones said the West players have about four years experience on average. Some students who moved to the Shallotte area from other places have played eight or 10 years.

"For a first-year program it's going real well," he said. "I've seen incredible improvement in our team. I think it's going very well."

Jones said the 22-man roster includes a lot of ninth- and 10th-graders, meaning West Brunswick should only improve in the years to come.

Steve Rice, a science and math teacher at South Brunswick, is coaching a Cougar team that includes eight freshman who played soccer in middle school.

"The kids are real excited about it and they're doing really well," Rice said. "They're improving all the time."

Rice, who coached high school

soccer for four years in Knoxville, Tenn., said he's noticed steady improvement in all three teams during the season.

"Everybody's on a par here, and the games are extremely competitive. You could toss a coin to predict who will win each game."

The Cougar coach said the news seems to be spreading about the new soccer program, because he's seeing more and more fans at each game.

Best said soccer was introduced in the middle schools two years ago because those students needed a spring sport, and the county already had a strong youth baseball program.

"I expected that interest to carry over into the high schools and that's just what has happened," he said of middle school soccer.

Best and a committee of parents, principals and school officials decided to expand soccer into the high schools, and the school board gave each school \$2,000 to get started.

The soccer program allows students who aren't interested in playing football a chance to be part of a competitive high school team, Best said.

A lot of parents and fans are learning about soccer at the games. "It's a real demanding sport physically and requires a lot of agility," Best said.

With interest in soccer "spiraling" across the nation, Best said local students deserve the same opportunity as kids in other parts of the country.

The three local high schools are the only ones in the Waccamaw Conference with soccer teams, and the other member schools aren't interested in starting a program now.

Best said that could create scheduling problems over the next few years, because Topsail, Dixon and Clinton are the closest 1-A and 2-A schools with soccer programs.

Wilmington's public schools have soccer teams, but they are probably too competitive for the local schools at this point.

South Brunswick's Rice thinks it will take a few years for the Brunswick County program to "catch up" with the New Hanover County schools. But he and others are optimistic about the future.

"We don't need to jump in and play those 4-A schools yet," Best added. "Maybe in three years we'll be ready."



WEST BRUNSWICK SOCCER COACH Kevin Jones (center) rounds up the troops for a halftime pep talk during a recent match against South Brunswick.

## Cheerleaders Win At Fair Cheer-Off

The varsity cheerleading teams at South and West Brunswick high schools finished first and second respectively in the New Hanover County Fair Cheer-Off Oct. 14.

The local squads were among four varsity cheerleading teams that competed in a five-minute cheer/dance routine, said West Brunswick Cheerleading Coach Kathy Bryant.

Teams were judged on spirit, cheer movement and crowd appeal. Mrs. Bryant said the winning teams received trophies and a cash award.

## Whiteville Romps Past Scorpions 49-0

Tailback Dennis Smith and fullback Dennis Gillispie scored three touchdowns each to lead Whiteville past host North Brunswick 49-0 last Friday in Waccamaw 2-A Conference football play.

Smith also ran for 160 yards on 16 carries and Gillispie added another 124 yards on 13 carries to lead the Wolfpack offense which ground out 354 total yards.

The win for Whiteville was its 15th consecutive decision over North Brunswick which has never defeated the Wolfpack.

The loss was North Brunswick's sixth straight and the Scorpions' third shutout in their last four games.

Whiteville (3-1, 5-2) continues league play Friday hosting West Columbus while North Brunswick (0-4, 1-6) visits West Brunswick. Both games begin at 7:30 p.m.

## South Brunswick Tops Mustangs For Third Straight Win

South Brunswick extended its longest winning streak of the prep football season to three games with last Friday's 22-14 win over South Robeson in Waccamaw 2-A Conference play.

The visiting Cougars took an early 14-0 lead on a pair of touchdown passes by quarterback Todd Vice.

South Brunswick (3-1, 4-3) continues league play Friday hosting Fairmont while South Robeson (1-3, 1-6) entertains East Bladen. Both games begin at 7:30 p.m.



JAMIE BRUNER of South Brunswick High School boots a penalty kick against West Brunswick.

## Trojans Split With North And South In Soccer

West Brunswick divided a pair of Waccamaw 2-A Conference soccer matches with South and North Brunswick last week.

The Trojans got two goals each from Matt Shreve and Chris Payne to edge South Brunswick 4-1 before dropping a 1-0 loss to North Brunswick.

Trojan goalie Jerome Marlow

made two key saves on South Brunswick penalty shots.

Casey McBride scored the only goal for the Scorpions and goalie Steve Brigman recorded 16 saves to lead North Brunswick.

Both West and North Brunswick have identical 3-3 records while South Brunswick is 2-4.

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