

Sailors poised for another championship run

Players tend to take their lead from the coach. At least that's the way Duane Verderaime sees it.

"Every coach has a different approach," said Verderaime, head field hockey coach for Mount de Sales Academy, Catonsville.

"I tend to turn it over to the team and the captains, and that seems to work for us," he said.

Verderaime is in his second season with the Sailors and in 2006 took them all the way to the IAAM B Conference championship game where they fell to Maryvale Preparatory School, Brooklandville, 1-0. "We were written off early last season, but the girls just stepped it up. From that championship experience, I knew we would have a strong team coming into the season since we were returning our top three defenders," said Verderaime.

The Sailors are posting a 5-2-1 conference record as of Oct. 7, and are contenders for the title again this year. In fact, the Sailors are on a 3-0 run since Oct. 2 with conference wins over Park (3-0), defending champions Maryvale Prep (2-0) and a 1-0 win over The Seton Keough High School, Baltimore, Oct. 7.

Taking their lead from their coach, the players focus on continued development of their skill sets. "You know, many of these players haven't learned the skills before, and so I'm always in a teaching mode," said Verderaime.

Balancing a full-time law practice, serving as legal representation for the Baltimore City Union Workers and the Howard County Police officers, Verderaime also teaches law classes at Baltimore Community College. As if that's not enough to keep one busy with a family and a baby on the way, Verderaime is, himself, a field hockey player. "I picked the game up about 11 years ago. I love playing this sport; it's great."

In terms of de Sales' success, the team is well balanced but looks to the returning

defensive trio of junior Jess Phelan and seniors Rachel Bacon and Jacki Merkel to set the pace.

Verderaime also noted the stellar play of senior Megan Kunkel in the goal. "This is Megan's first full year in the goal," said Verderaime, who stated that Kunkel earned the starting rights in the goal during the 2006 play-offs and hasn't looked back. To sum it up, Verderaime says that Kunkel is "unbelievable."