

A SEASON FOR THE AGES...



SHELBYVILLE
TIMES-GAZETTE



Eagles' run to state caps historic season

By GARY JOHNSON
Sports Writer

To say that Shelbyville Central's Golden Eagle soccer team had a great season would be a huge understatement.

It was a historical season that was three

decades in the making after going undefeated in regular season district play, a first-ever region title that led to a win in the sectional round followed a berth to the TSSAA Spring Fling before falling to a talented Brentwood team in the opening round of the state.

"I think it's a testament to the hard work of the past 20-plus years of teams

to establish soccer in our community. We frequently talk about those past teams and the trials they encountered in making soccer relevant in our town and school. Having Neal Gordon around allows us to have a firsthand account of that journey from then to now," Shelbyville Central coach Chris Fritz said.

"Also, someone recently said that if you

look at the schools that consistently make the Spring Fling state tournament, you will notice there are soccer powerhouses due to the abundance of travel soccer programs in those areas. We were able to crack into that group of elite schools by not only having our guys playing travel, but also through

▶ See **Eagles**, Page 3

2022 GOLDEN EAGLES

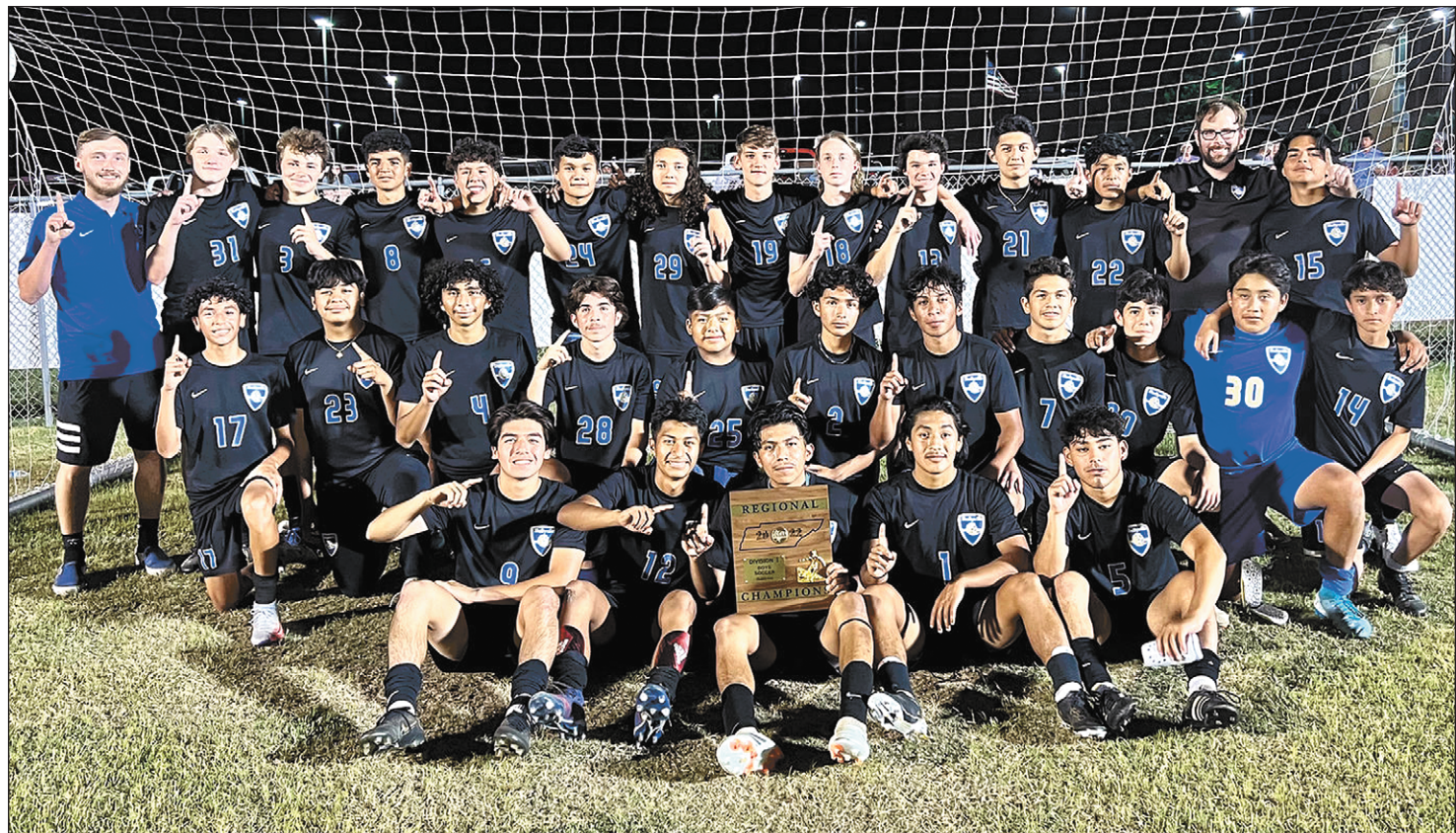
No. 00	Gabriel Hernandez	Def	Sr.
No. 1	Daniel Juarez	Mid	Sr.
No. 2	Brandon Cruz	Def	Jr.
No. 3	Kolby Themm	Def	So.
No. 4	Ryan Tacuba	Def	Jr.
No. 5	Brian Contreras	Mid	Sr.
No. 6	Jonathan Medel	Def	Jr.
No. 7	Enrique Juarez	Def	So.
No. 8	Emmanuel Leyva	Fwd	Fr.
No. 9	Edgar Solis	Fwd	Sr.
No. 12	Gami Vazquez	Def	Sr.
No. 16	Daniel Torres	Def	Fr.
No. 17	Victor Galvan	Mid	Fr.
No. 18	Eli Nave	FWK	Jr.
No. 19	Ben Betzelberger	GK	Fr.
No. 20	Rodrigo Hernandez	Def	Fr.
No. 22	Alex Sebastian	Mid	So.
No. 27	Drew Taylor	Mid	So.
No. 28	Jose Sarabia	Mid	So.
No. 29	Yaden Nino	Mid	Fr.
No. 30	Jonathan Rojas	GK	Jr.
No. 31	Jacob Betzelberger	Fwd	Jr.

Head Coach: Chris Fritz
Assistant: Jamie Groves
Manager: Emlin Olivares

2022 REWIND


Feb. 22	Siegel	4-0	L
March 15	Riverdale	3-1	W
March 18	Columbia Central	3-2	L
March 25	Morristown-Hamblen West	3-0	L
March 27	Briarcrest	1-0	L
April 2	Brentwood	5-1	L
April 5	Franklin Co.*	2-1	W
April 7	Warren Co.*	3-0	W
April 12	Coffee Co.*	3-2	W
April 14	Franklin Co.*	2-1	W
April 19	Warren Co.*	9-0	W
April 21	Coffee Co.*	2-0	W
April 27	Stewarts Creek	2-0	L
May 5	Ensworth	3-1	L
May 17	Howard**	4-2	W
May 19	Ooltewah**	3-2	W
May 21	LaVergne***	2-1	W
May 24	Brentwood****	4-1	L

*Denotes District 6 3-A game
** Denotes Region 3 3-A game
*** Denotes Class 3-A sectional game
**** Denotes Class 3-A state tournament game



Shelbyville Central poses with its first-ever region championship plaque after a thrilling come-from-behind win over Ooltewah.

T-G Photo by Gary Johnson



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T-G Photo by Chris Siers

Senior Brian Contreras (5) was a key piece of the midfield line for the Eagles during their run to the Spring Fling.

Eagles

(Continued from Page 2)

our year-round hard work and our commitment to our team as a family. For me this team, demonstrated most of all the ideas of being a family. I really believe these guys were not just playing for themselves but for our giant soccer family which includes every guy that played here at Central.”

The Eagles started a bit slow but seemed to grow and bond as a team as the season progressed.

“We obviously started off slow with a not-so great record coming into the district regular season (3-6). We absolutely love winning, but we are not going to win the games that matter by playing weaker competition. I have never been concerned with that regular season record, because I knew the teams that we lost to were state tournament contenders, too. We never lost those games in a blowout and had strong moments of play in each game,”

Fritz said.

“We made a point of playing the best in the hopes that we could eventually beat those best teams when the time came,” Fritz said. “When the district started, we still weren’t playing the attacking brand of soccer that we try to implement. After each game, we would spend some time as a team breaking the game film down and then, immediately go to the field and work on sharpening our game.”

One key aspect to this team was its desire to win and never give up no matter what the circumstance was.

“The will to win comes from our strongest players who bought into our idea of having the right reaction. Our leadership core knows that we constantly will keep them on their toes by conditioning and practicing in terrible weather or making bad calls in a scrimmage. Every day in training we try to present opportunities to make a mistake but also to reverse that mistake with the right reaction. When your best ball-handlers lose the ball and have the mindset to win it back

immediately, then all the other players will follow suit. This positive reaction to losing the ball translates to going down in a game as well. In both region championship and sectional game, we faced that adversity of being down a goal or two at half. In both of those games, the boys collectively found a way to bring us back into the game and win,” Fritz said. “Our body language on the bench also plays a big role in that as we have encouraged our guys to cheer each other on for every positive moment whether big or small. We have our boys celebrating each other’s tackles, dribbles, and even passes. When that energy is present on the bench, you can see it channel directly to the field.”

This team was blessed with talented upperclassmen that had a lot of playing experience.

“This year’s leaders were not as talkative as years past. In fact, we made a point of forcing them to be vocal at half-time and in the post-game conversations. This wasn’t bad though as these seniors tend lead through their actions. Instead of talking about getting stronger and faster, Daniel Juarez, Gabriel Hernandez, Edgar Solis, and Brian Contreras would go to the gym for an extra work-out after and between our team weight-lifting sessions. These seniors are also great young men. They often volunteer to help maintain

the field and they themselves will collect all the equipment and return it after practices. Senior Gami Vazquez paints lines straighter than most professional grounds men. Anytime I would message the team and say who could do such and such? One of them would respond immediately and say, “I got it coach.” Several of the seniors quit their jobs during season just to be at every practice and game, which is testament to the level of buy-in that we need to be successful.”

Even though the Eagles lost a number of valuable players due to graduation, others will be called upon to fill that void.

“We are returning some serious next-level players. Upcoming seniors, Jonathan Medel and Brandon Cruz are both overlooked workhorses and can play pretty much any position. Two other seniors will be trying to keep the other team out of the goal will be our slide-tackling monster Ryan Tacuba and our penalty-blocking goalkeeper Jonathan Rojas. Additionally, we have upcoming junior and all-region player Kolby Themm who is so versatile that he could play anywhere. Several other upcoming seniors to keep an eye on in the attack will be Yahir Cervantes, Eli Nave, and Jake Betzelberger. These guys each have a very unique skillset, but they all can create magic around the goal,” Fritz said.

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A glance back at the season's best



T-G Photo by Chris Siers

Confetti flies on the field at Shelbyville Central after the Eagles defeated LaVergne in the Class 3A sectional in order to advance to the state tournament.

Congratulations To All Athletes!



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History making season 30 years in making for Eagles

By **GARY JOHNSON**
Sports Writer

The Shelbyville Central Golden Eagle soccer program started 30 years ago with a passion from former coach Neal Gordon.

While Gordon has since passed the whistle and proverbial coaching torch on to current coach Chris Fritz, the 2022 run that included a district and region title en route to the first-ever state tournament berth was the result of Gordon's influence over the program over the last three decades.

While no longer head coach, Gordon remains invested in the program.

"Neal brought me into the soccer coaching world and kind of laid the foundation for what it would take to get to this

moment. More importantly, he showed me how important it is to genuinely connect with the young people I coach," Eagle coach Chris Fritz said.

"Anyone who knows Neal is aware that he's a passionate guy and he pours that passion into others. Every time Neal encounters a player or student he coached you can see how he lights up, because there is no one that loves people as much as Neal. During the sectional game, we knew Neal couldn't be on the sideline due to a prior commitment, so we hung his trademark soccer overalls on the fence in his honor. Seeing Neal's emotional reaction to the region championship and AAA sectional game will always be one of the proudest

moments of my career," Fritz said.

The success the Eagles had this season will be looked upon for years to come.

"The program will obviously be riding off the momentum of this historic season. We must make sure not to fall into that slump that sometimes occur after high-achieving season. We have to play braver in the first half of these big games, so we don't put ourselves in the position of fighting from behind. Hopefully, the experience of this run will ease some of that first-half nervousness. We need to add to our strength and explosiveness to beat those top-level teams," Fritz said.

"Our future teams will have to really get after their personal fitness," Fritz said. "We also need our boys to keep playing high-level travel soccer in the off-season. I think most of the young guys are interested in taking their talent to the next level and that just means more time in the weight room and on the field working on individual skills. We have already begun working this summer for next year and will play in 7 on 7 tournament in Nolensville in July. Following that, we will work on our

strength and explosiveness in the weight room, while the guys are playing travel in the fall."

Fritz wants to build a state contender year in and year out and realized the importance of his feeder systems.

"Many years ago, when I first took over as head coach Neal gave me some advice to get involved with youth soccer. If you come in my classroom, you would see the names of several current juniors, sophomores, and freshman on plaques from when they were eight and nine playing travel ball around Tennessee and winning. These guys will all be returning to continue our journey next year. Additionally, we have young boys playing and winning in high-level travel in every grade from 2nd to 8th. This will hopefully make us stronger as we see the kids of many of our former players become involved in our program," he said.

"Lastly, all soccer programs in the community could see the benefit of more lighted and soccer-dedicated fields. I think when the park finishes that master plan we will see another explosion of soccer in the area."



T-G Photo by Chris Siers

Eagle coach Chris Fritz raises his fists in triumph after the Eagles secured a spot in the Class 3A state tournament.

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A glance back at the season's best



Shelbyville Central huddles up prior to the Class 3A sectional match against LaVergne.



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Joel Landers



Gami Vazquez dribbles through several defenders in Shelbyville's Class 3A sectional match against LaVergne.

T-G Photos by Chris Siers

A glance back at the season's best



Sophomore midfielder Alex Sebastian puts a header on a loose ball against LaVergne.



Jonathan Rojas was the heart and soul of the Eagle defense with spectacular play in goal throughout the Eagles' historic run.

T-G Photos by Chris Siers



Kolby Themm is swarmed by the Eagles after scoring the go-ahead goal in the Class 3A sectional match against LaVergne following a two-hour storm delay.

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A glance back at the season's best



Senior Edgar Solis has been one of the key attackers for the Eagles over his career with Shelbyville.

T-G Photo by Gary Johnson



Daniel Juarez was one of several seniors that leaves big shoes to fill for the Eagles next season.

T-G Photo by Gary Johnson



Ryan Tacuba had a strong showing in the postseason and helped anchor the back line for the Eagles' defense.

T-G Photo by Chris Siers

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Viqueens' historic run reaches state tournament

By **CHRIS SIERS**
sports@t-g.com

The Community Viqueens blazed trails in the 2022 season never before seen by any player in a Purple and Gold uniform.

Not only did Community forge a path to a 26-13-1 overall record, but Community broke barriers for the first time in school history, not only qualifying for the Class 2A state tournament, but also defeated state power Summertown in the opening-round of the tournament.

For coach Cam Farrell, the Viqueens reaching new heights for the program didn't really come as a surprise after seeing his team put in the work and come through in key games throughout the season.

"Those kids, they just never give up and they work hard. Their attitudes. To me, all the success we had was 100 % based on their attitudes and their parents' involvement in the program," he said.

The family environment allowed the Viqueens to gel in the dugout and become a formidable opponent on the field.

Prior to the 2022 season, Community's best record in the past decade came in 2013 when the Viqueens posted a 23-13 overall record, but saw their season come to a close in the district tournament.

While the Viqueens compete in District 7-AA consisting only of four teams, Community was guaranteed a spot in the Region 4-AA tournament, as long as they were able to reach the district championship.

Although they had a much smaller district slate the Viqueens proved to be plenty battle-tested from playing a tough non-district schedule.

Coupled with the strong support from the community, the Viqueens were able to string together several quality wins this season, including their run in the Walking Horse Classic.

An early indicator the 2022 season was on the verge of being a special one for the Viqueens came with a win over Zion Christian to claim the Walking Horse title—especially after Zion had defeated Community three times prior to the championship.

Zion went on to finish 27-3 this season. "We have super good parents and good kids. I think when you put all that together, it allows a coach to just coach. This was very smooth. Everybody is on the same page," Farrell said.

In the district slate this season,

Community posted sweeps over Cascade and Grundy County, but just couldn't get over the hump against two-time defending state champion and 2022 state runner-up Forrest.

The Viqueens met the Lady Rockets twice during the regular season and played four times in the postseason, including for district and region titles.

Even though Community's run finished the season 0-6 against the Lady Rockets this season, the Viqueens were able to take down Bledsoe County in the state sectional and punch their ticket to the state tournament for the first time in school history.

"I still don't really know what to say about it. I'm just super proud of them. I'm not going to say I'm surprised because I know their fight and what they give, day in and day out," Farrell said.

The path to the state tournament was built around what became a fairly complete team, loaded with quality pitching, hitters throughout the lineup, and a stellar defensive effort in the field.

Freshman pitcher Tayler Wessner quickly became one of the biggest components of the Viqueen roster.

"That kid has ice in her veins. For her (Wessner) to come in and not think twice about what she's asked to do is everything. Her attitude—through all the games we played—she never showed any kind of negative attitude," Farrell said.

That leading by example approach from a freshman was contagious in the dugout and everything fell into place around Community's pitching.

"Everything was positive and that's contagious. She came in as a freshman, did everything she was supposed to do, but showed everybody with her play of finding a way to win," Farrell added.

Community was blessed in 2022 with a multitude of young talent and with just three seniors, Community saw the underclassmen deliver day in and day out.

From the lead-off efforts of Abi Murrill to cleanup batter Carlie Blanton, the young Viqueens delivered daily to help the Viqueens reach the state tournament.

Even more so than having quality hitting, pitching and fielding, Farrell said his team's softball IQ was invaluable this season.

"Speed, power and I've got smart softball players. I've got kids that know how to study the game and they're classroom kids. They get it. They're good students," he said.

While the run in the state tournament ended with a loss to eventual state champion Alcoa and Loretto, the experience of having been to the state tournament is invaluable for the returning players next season.

"I'm super proud of what we accomplished but those girls have got to work. The thing about it, those girls are work horses. I don't have to stay on them about working. They're all playing summer ball right now," Farrell said.

Simply making it to the state tournament, just isn't enough for Farrell and the Viqueens.

"The end goal is to win the state tournament. We'll set about 10 goals, but that end goal is to get to state and win state. I'm not satisfied with just going. I'd like to go and I'd like for those girls to be able to walk down their hallways wearing their rings and hanging banners. I want people to understand when they come through here that we have athletes here. We take our sports and our schools serious," he said.

Although the season came to an end, the work for the Viqueens isn't over with the sights set on a state title in 2023.

"We're going to start pretty heavy in the weight room and then we'll start hitting and skill stuff just to stay with it. I want them working from now until we start. If it's important to them, they will. That's the difference. That's the one thing I saw in the state tournament," Farrell said.

"Those girls are ready to go. You can see the weightlifting and you could see how some of them were getting after it. We have to work harder in the weight room and studying softball as far as film and knowing what to do. That's what the offseason is for. When we add everything to it, we're going to be something special next year."

2022 RECAP

March 17	Culleoka	6-3	W
March 19	Culleoka	5-0	L
March 19	Zion Christian	3-2	L
March 19	Spring Hill	9-0	W
March 19	Zion Christian	10-0	W
March 21	E. Hickman	18-4	W
March 22	C. Magnet	18-8	W
March 24	Gibson Southern	9-1	L
March 28	Stewarts Creek	14-8	L
March 28	N. Jackson	6-5	W
March 29	Lauderdale Co.	8-5	L
April 7	Grundy Co.	10-0	W
April 8	Cannon Co.	11-0	W
April 8	Zion Christian	7-4	L
April 9	Mt. Pleasant	12-4	W
April 9	Culleoka	17-3	W
April 9	Mt. Pleasant	14-4	W
April 9	Zion Christian	3-1	W
April 12	Forrest	10-4	L
April 14	Cascade	9-3	W
April 18	Hickman Co.	10-0	W
April 19	Forrest	12-0	L
April 21	Cascade	6-5	W
April 28	Hickman Co.	13-0	W
April 29	Culleoka	7-5	W
May 2	Fayetteville	11-0	W
May 3	Columbia Central	6-6	T
May 6	Cascade*	6-1	W
May 10	Forrest*	5-4	L
May 11	Cascade*	8-1	L
May 12	Forrest*	10-9	L
May 16	E. Nashville**	31-0	W
May 18	Forrest**	14-6	L
May 21	Bledsoe Co.***	1-0	W
May 24	Summertown****	2-0	W
May 25	Alcoa****	4-0	L
May 25/26	Loretto****	7-5	L

*Denotes District 7-AA game
**Denotes Region 4-AA game
***Denotes Class 2A sectional game
****Denotes 2A state tournament game

2022 COMMUNITY VIQUEENS

No. 1	Chloe West C Jr.
No. 2	Emma Bentley 1B/RHP Sr.
No. 4	Abigail Brooks OF Jr.
No. 5	Carlie Blanton 3B/C Fr.
No. 6	Audrina Bearden 2B Fr.
No. 8	Jacie Yancey OF Fr.
No. 9	Addison Cothran OF Fr.
No. 13	Abigail Brown SS Jr.
No. 15	Taylor Wessner RHP/2B Fr.
No. 16	Ashlyn Yoes C/OF So.
No. 21	Madison Sudberry OF Sr.
No. 22	Zoey Dixon LF/RHP Jr.
No. 25	Hannah Smith OF Jr.
No. 30	Autumn Craig OF Jr.
No. 44	Hailey Farrar RHP/1B Sr.
No. 55	Hailey Mitchell RHP/2B Jr.
No. 77	Abigail Murrill CF Jr.
Coaches: Cam Farrell and Chris Grooms Assistants: Eddie Barnes and Kendall Durard	

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Viqueens stand tall among state powers

By **CHRIS SIERS**
sports@t-g.com

Anyone who follows softball in the mid-state knows the reputation that follows the Forrest Lady Rockets.

Forrest began an incredible run in 2019 and won the Class 2A state championship.

The Lady Rockets followed their 2019 title with second-straight title in 2021 and had it not been for the COVID-19 pandemic that canceled the 2020 season, Forrest could well have entered the 2022 season as the winners of three-straight state titles.

Simply put, championships run through Chapel Hill in softball.

But in 2022, the defending champs faced one of the most complete teams in the state right in their own backyard in District 7-AA—Community.

The regular season meetings against Forrest ended in the way many meetings between the schools had—big wins for the Lady Rockets.

Forrest took a 10-4 win over Community in their first meeting and followed with a 12-0 win in the second game.

But once the season shifted to postseason play, Community pushed the Lady Rockets

to the brink in district play.

“It’s hard to beat anybody over and over. They’re well-coached. You’re going to have to play ball. One thing I’ve seen with Forrest, it doesn’t matter if you’re up 100-0, they’re going to keep doing the same things they started the game doing,” Viqueen coach Cam Farrell said.

The Viqueens got a taste of what they were truly capable of in 2022 during a winner’s bracket meeting against the Lady Rockets.

Community advanced to the district semifinal round after beating Cascade 6-1 in the postseason opener.

Forrest plastered Grundy County with a 17-0 romp to begin their title defense.

What transpired in the district semifinals came courtesy of a four-run sixth inning, which put the Viqueens on the cusp of reaching the district championship.

But with the game on the line and with two outs in the bottom of the seventh, Forrest rallied for two runs to force extra innings.

The game eventually was decided in the 10th on a walk-off single for Forrest.

The loss dropped Community to the consolation bracket for a rematch against Cascade and the Viqueens were able to earn a rematch against the Lady Rockets, beating Cascade 8-1.

As in their first meeting in the tournament, Forrest jumped out to an early lead but another four-run inning, which came in the top of the seventh, allowed Community to hold a 9-8 lead over Forrest, but as in their first meeting, Forrest rallied for a pair of runs in the bottom of the inning to claim the District 7-AA title.

Falling in the district championship put the Viqueens on the road in the first-round of the Region 4-AA tournament and Community responded with a 31-0 thrashing of East Nashville to once again face a rematch against the Lady Rockets.

Forrest capped its season sweep over Community with a 14-6 region championship win to once again put the Viqueens on the road to keep their season alive.

While the Viqueens were knocking on the door of upsetting the perennial state power Lady Rockets, Farrell says Community is doing the things needed to finally get over the hump against Forrest.

“We have to figure out how to overcome that and just play our game and not focus on the Forrest-Community connect. They’ve beat us 40-plus times. That’s why I told them just go play softball. We’ll get that figured out. We’re fast approaching on that,” he said.

Once again going on the road, the



T-G Photo by Chris Siers

Members of the runner-up Viqueens who took home season awards for their efforts in the 2022 season are Taylor Wessner (All-District), Abbi Murrill (All-District), Chloe West (All-District), Abi Brown (All-District), Hailey Farrar (Honorable Mention), Haley Mitchell (Honorable Mention), Emma Bentley (Honorable Mention), Zoey Dixon (Honorable Mention) and Carlie Blanton (Defensive Player of the Year).

Viqueens faced the daunting task in a win or go home game at Bledsoe County.

Entering the Class 2A sectional round, Bledsoe County had just one loss on the season—a 5-4 defeat to Chattanooga Christian—and sported a 30-1 overall record.

Farrell’s message to the Viqueens? “Go play softball.”

That’s just what they did.

Relying on the steady arm of freshman pitcher Taylor Wessner and some timely hitting, Community stunned the 30-1 Lady Warriors and punched its ticket to the state tournament for the first time in school history.

Abbi Murrill laced a two-out double to the gap and then scored an on base hit by Zoey Dixon.

In 20 of Bledsoe County’s wins, the Lady Warriors scored at least 10 runs in 20 games.

After qualifying for the state tournament, Community drew a tough first-round opponent in Summertown, who entered the state competition with a 36-9 overall record.

“As a coach, we look at stuff. We see records. We see 30-1. I don’t care who you’re playing. That’s impressive. And then 36 wins is impressive. My message to the girls was just go play softball. Who cares about all that? Go play softball. They play softball like you play softball,” Farrell said.

“It’s all in how you approach it. Are you going to be positive and play your best game and focus on you as an individual so

you can make the team better or are you to look at their record and already be beat before you step on the field.”

Just like the sectional matchup against Bledsoe County, that’s just what the Viqueens did.

Simply qualifying for the state tournament wasn’t enough for the Purple and Gold.

Community took another close win against a talented opponent and claimed its first-ever state tournament win with a 2-0 victory over the Lady Eagles.

Navigating the state tournament against rains that blanketed Murfreesboro, Community went on to fall to Loretto and eventual champion Alcoa to end their historic run.

Now the goal shifts to putting in the offseason work and returning to the Spring Fling next season.

“It all depends on the offseason work, as far as what they’re going to do. We can’t have just two or three people at workouts. We have to have more involvement. That’s what hurt us in the past. Our offseason wasn’t really strong, but that’s going to change,” Farrell said.

“We know exactly what it takes and what we need to be doing. I’m planning and trying to figure out all the time what the best direction is. We got some kids that came in with tryouts and we have some kids returning—we’re going to be a special group. If we can be coached, keep our calm and do what we’re supposed to be doing, we’re going to get after it.”

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Viqueen coach Cam Farrell huddles up the Viqueens in the dugout in between innings during a game this season.

T-G Photo by Rickey Clardy



Senior Emma Bentley provided some timely hitting during the Viqueens' run to the state tournament.

T-G Photo by Chris Siers



Short stop Abi Brown was a key piece of defense for the Viqueen infield.

T-G Photo by Chris Siers

A glance back at the season's best



Freshman pitcher Taylor Wessner established herself as one of the top pitchers in the area on Community's run to the state tournament.

T-G Photo by Chris Siers

A glance back at the season's best



ABOVE: Community added a runner-up district and region plaque to the trophy case in Unionville.

RIGHT: Taylor Wessner is greeted at the dugout after scoring a run against Forrest in the district tournament.

BELOW: Abi Brown flashed the leather and was able to establish herself as a tough defender for the Purple and Gold.

T-G Photos by Chris Siers



A glance back at the season's best



Hayley Mitchell became a steady arm for the Viqueens in the regular season.



Center fielder Abbi Murrill had the outfield on lockdown for the Viqueens during the 2022 season.



T-G Photo by Chris Siers

Catcher Chloe West and Taylor Wessner chat in between innings against Cascade in the District 7-AA tournament.



The Viqueens huddle up around coach Cam Farrell in the pitcher's circle during the Spring Fling.

A glance back at the season's best



Zoey Dixon (22) gets some coaching from coach Cam Farrell against Cascade this season.

T-G Photos by Chris Siers



Once on base, Abbi Murrill became an absolute weapon for Community and stole several bases to help put runs on the board.

A photograph of a baseball field with a white base in the foreground. A white baseball with red stitching is positioned on a wooden bat, which is resting on the base. The background is the brown dirt of the field.

Congratulations on history-making seasons

The great thing about covering sports is being immersed on the sidelines with the teams you cover. From walking the sidelines of football games in the fall, to spending nearly five months in the gym covering basketball, you become part of the community, even if you're just there to capture the events of the game.

Spring is so different in the fact it's such a sprint of a season that's over in six to eight weeks.

Even though the time spent with the spring teams isn't nearly as long as other sports, the 2022 season was every bit as memorable.

Every so often, teams are able to catch lightning in a bottle and truly create something special.

From covering the Community Viqueens softball and Shelbyville Central Golden Eagle soccer teams, it's been an absolute blast seeing these two programs not only create memories that will last a lifetime, but create a legacy within their programs by making their respective first-ever trips to the Spring Fling.

About 17 years ago, I got a chance to do something similar with my high school in North Carolina.

I was a runner and competed year-round in cross country, indoor and outdoor track.

During the 2005 cross country season, my team got a taste of what it's like to compete at the state level as we were able to defeat national powerhouse Watauga High School in the region meet and advance to the state meet.

Having been there, I know how special these memories are.

Being among the state's best in any regard is a remarkable achievement that's a 100% credit to the work put in by these athletes.

As a member of the community, being on the sidelines and in the dugouts for these two state tournament runs was an absolute joy for us to cover.

As journalists, we're taught to be impartial third parties who simply report what we see.

I've got to admit, I've gotten to be a little biased this spring—I wanted to see these teams achieve greatness.

That's just what they did.

The 2022 Community Viqueen softball and Golden Eagle soccer team are forever etched in Bedford County history.

There's been a legacy created by these two programs this season that hopefully will carry on for years moving forward.

The groundwork has been laid and I speak on behalf of the Times-Gazette staff in saying we're excited to see what comes next.

There's always more history to chase, whether it's adding district and region championship trophies to the trophy case, or finding a way back to the state tournament.

It's arguably the most fun time of the year for us being among the state's media with all eyes focused on the top talent in the state vying for a championship.

With as much fun as we had covering the games, I can only imagine what it's been like for these athletes this spring.

From Community battling the Forrest Lady Rockets to beating a 30-1 program in Bledsoe County, to the Eagles rallying for two goals after a near two-hour rain delay in the Class 3A sectional, these games are representative of the dedication by the athletes, coaches, parents and school staffs.

Being part of these rides and being able to document each step of the way has been an absolute joy for us.

From all of us at the Times-Gazette, we want to offer our deepest congratulations to the Viqueens and Eagles for their historic seasons and we're anxious to see you guys take the next step in 2023.

We'll be with you guys every step of the way, whether it's in the dugout or on the sidelines.

Chris Siers is sports editor of the Times-Gazette. Email him at sports@t-g.com.