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Wednesday, 11 July 2012 15:21

It's not often that a fourth-place team in Wisconsin's toughest high school soccer conference receives the lion's share of postseason honors.

Consider the Grafton Black Hawks among the chosen few this spring.

Their girls' squad had four players named to the All-North Shore Conference first team in a recent vote of coaches.

Representing Grafton are forward Carley Pfannerstill, midfielder Emma Fatla, defender Gabi Kuester and goalkeeper Alissa Viste, all seniors.

Despite taking fourth in the league with a 4-3 record, the Hawks had twice as many first-team honorees as any other team, including champion Cedarburg.

"To be in the middle of the standings and have that many players on the first team shows that we've gotten some respect," Grafton coach Don Arnold said.

"There are so many good players in this conference, we were very happy to have that kind of recognition."

Two other Grafton players were also singled out by the coaches. Midfielder Hannah Knauer was named to the second team, and defender Audrey Dickmann received honorable mention.

Among other local teams, Port Washington had two players given honorable mention — midfielder Caity Tydrick and goalkeeper Sarah Maechtle.

Pfannerstill was the top offensive threat for the Hawks, who used a late-season surge to reach the WIAA state playoffs for the fourth straight year and finished 20-7-2 overall.

Using her speed and ball-handling skills, she led Grafton with 23 goals and 16 assists for all games.

"Carley was a huge playmaker for us," said Arnold, whose team reached the semifinals of the

Division 1 state tournament.

"Anytime she got the ball, she seemed to make something happen. She really stepped up her play this season."

Pfannerstill will take her soccer talent to Concordia University Wisconsin in Mequon this fall.

Fatla, who joined Viste as an two-time All-NSC first-team selection, was again one of the area's top midfielders. She sparked the Hawks' transition game and had seven goals and seven assists despite missing 10 games because of a concussion.

"Emma was a real force at outside midfield for us," Arnold said. "She was strong on offense but also really steadied the defense."

Fatla will play soccer at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Kuester excelled in an unsung role as a shut-down defender, typically drawing the assignment of marking the opposing team's best scoring threat.

"Gabi was just a solid defender who was always in the right position," Arnold said.

"She always defended with pride. Any time there was a top forward coming in against us, she was the one assigned to shut them down."

Viste, a four-year starter, anchored a hard-nosed Grafton defense that posted 15 shutouts. She had 105 saves with a goals-against average of 0.7 per game.

"Alissa was very focused, very tough mentally," her coach said. "She didn't give up very many goals, and when she did, she didn't let that bother her enough to interfere with doing her job."

Viste continued to improve yearly, capping each season with a pressure-packed appearance in the state tournament.

"She was so solid. I can't remember anyone for us playing four years in goal at that level," Arnold said.

Knauer, a senior, had three goals and two assists and a well-earned reputation as the Hawks' physically toughest player.

"She's a rock in the midfield and did a lot of hard work for us," Arnold said.

"Whenever she went after a 50/50 ball, it was really 90/10 in her favor. She would just outwork people for the ball."

Dickmann, a senior, gave Grafton's backfield a steady sweeper. Besides playing solid defense, she contributed two assists.

“She was a quality player with excellent dribbling skills. She was there to control things for us,” Arnold said.

“She was one of the reasons our defense was so good.”

Port failed to win a conference game this season, but it wasn’t because of Tydrick or Maechtle.

Tydrick, a senior, was one of the Pirates’ top offensive players despite being slowed by injuries. She had three goals and four assists for all games.

“Caity did a nice job for us. She was our center midfielder but had to play several different spots when we needed her,” Port coach Mike Bultman said.

“She had very good soccer skills and provided most of our offense in a season where we didn’t have a lot of goals.”

Maechtle, a sophomore, stood tall in the back line of an inexperienced team that found itself on defense much of the time.

“For a first-year player, Sarah did a phenomenal job,” Bultman said. “She stopped 63% of all shots, and she had to face a lot of shots 1-on-1 from 10 yards away.”

Having Maechtle back next season to anchor the defense should give the Pirates a major boost as they continue to rebuild, Bultman added.

Image Information: (From left to right) Carley Pfannerstill, Emma Fatla, Gabi Kuester, Alissa Viste