

## **Metro boys soccer looks wide open this season**

Written by

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Seven Metro players who were selected to the all-state boys soccer team in 2010 have graduated, leaving holes to fill.

With such a large talent exodus, the Metro area -- and in a larger sense the Mississippi Valley Conference -- appears as wide open as it has ever been.

Cedar Rapids Washington returns the only all-stater from last season in Brandon Besong, who will be looking to lead his Warriors back to state.

Washington will have to overcome five off-season suspensions, leaving the Warriors with only one experienced defender for the first third of the season before the suspensions are lifted.

The Xavier boys lost a lot of talent from last year's Class 2A state championship team, but the Saints are looking to reload with young players mixed with some returning experience.

The Saints also may look to some football players, who have not played soccer since middle school, to help the team out at certain positions.

Kennedy is in a similar boat to Xavier after last season. The Cougars lost seven starters off last year's third-place team. They are looking to reload with Gabe and Garret Christianson joining the team.

The Christianson brothers are talented club soccer players who have not gone out for high school soccer until this year. Their offensive prowess could help put Kennedy over the top and back into state title contention.

Marion and Prairie are trying to adjust to a new coach while simultaneously striving to reach state for the first time in school history.

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The Indians are packed with a senior class that goes 14 players deep and is loaded with experience.

For Prairie, the junior class is its big class, but the team is eager to break through to state this season, considering Prairie has fallen just one game short in each of the last three years.

The Linn-Mar Lions return the vast majority of their players, but the ones they lost will really hurt. Charles Barden was the Lions' leader for years before going to Valparaiso University to play Division I soccer.

The Jefferson J-Hawks are in the middle of remaking their team. This year they are not the big, strong team of physical players that had become the trademark of Jefferson soccer. Instead, for maybe the first time, the J-Hawks have speed. They must learn how to capitalize on it.

With such an open field, every team in the Metro thinks it has a chance at a state crown. And with so many unknowns out there for every team, they just might.

You can find stories about each Metro boys soccer team on the Metro Sports Report team pages. Click on your favorite school at the top of the MSR home page, then click on your favorite team.