

Legacy focused on living up to seed

Sabers have state title aspirations as boys soccer tourney begins

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Getting to the state boys soccer tournament with the talent parity across the West Region is no easy thing. Legacy, Jamestown, Minot and Bismarck High made it this year, but Century could have also joined the party if a few things go differently. Now the Sabers have a new challenge: battling their way through one of the toughest brackets in years to compete for their first state title.

“Some teams have a tradition of winning titles, but every year is a new team with new kids,” Legacy head coach Tom Marcis said. “We’re primed to try and win our first title, but every year is a new year. You always have to assume that at state you’re seeing the eight best teams in the state.”

For as young a program as Legacy is, this year is perhaps their toughest so far, for one reason in particular: Living up to the expectations of having and playing like one of the best teams in the state is not easy. They have met, perhaps even surpassed, expectations by toppling Jamestown in the West Region championship game to earn the West’s top seed. “I thought we played well, obviously we started a little slow, but we got our stride about halfway through the first half,” Marcis said. “We played a strong game the rest of the way. (Now at state), we’re hoping to set a tone, be ready to play hard and show we want to take the title, and have that tone set right from the beginning.” That victory allows the Sabers the most favorable draw out of the West, though their first opponent, Grand Forks Red River, is no cakewalk. Comfortable playing in low-scoring games all year, Red River’s best result of the season was arguably not even a win — their 1-1 tie against East No. 1 seed Fargo Shanley on Sept. 9 has a strong argument, though so does their win-and-in game against Fargo South in their last game of the regular season where they won 2-0.

“We’re looking at them as a dangerous team knowing they worked hard to get into the field,” Marcis said. “We want to bring our best game because they’ll be trying to bring theirs as well. Just because you’re the top seed doesn’t mean you’re getting an easy game in the first round, you are just aware of who your first opponent is going to be.

“We have to be aggressive from the start and really try to enforce our style of play on them. Even if it takes us a while to score, we have to stay calm, stay within ourselves and play our game.” Red River’s roster is filled with upperclassmen, giving the Roughriders perhaps an experience advantage over the Sabers, who do start and

feature a number of non-seniors. “They’re a strong, physical team with players that know how to play defense, so we’ll have to work hard to split their defense and spread them out,” Marcis said. “They also try to counter on you, so when we’re moving against them offensively, we have to be aware of any kind of counter they might try and use to score.”

With tape in their minds, Legacy knows their biggest task of the day is to play assignment sound soccer. With Red River’s love to score on counters, the Sabers’ back line will be tested when the Roughriders are able to score the ball away from their possession favored offense. “Minot plays strong defense and they love to counter,” Marcis said when asked to compare Red River’s style to a West team. “When you play a team like Minot, you’re getting a good test against a team with a good defense and a team that loves to counter, and that’s what Red River likes to do.