Written by Mike Kelly
Friday, 28 May 2010 08:11

The Avery High women's soccer team will put its best foot forward Saturday afternoon.

The Vikings (20-1-2), the No.1 team in the state in Class 1A, will play Southwest Onslow in the state championship game Saturday afternoon at 1 pm at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. And the Vikings are hoping to do what no other Avery team has been able to do----and that's win a state championship.

"I must admit, I am nervous," said Avery coach Tom Evaul. "It's new territory for me. We've been to four quarterfinal games and lost them all. But I have a lot of confidence in my team. The girls have put together a great season, and I'm just glad to be a part of it."

Avery advanced to its first state championship game by knocking off Lake Norman Charter 3-0 in the Western Finals last Saturday. And during their post-season march, the Vikings have been extremely stingy on defense. They've outscored their opponents by the whopping margin of 11-0, and for the year, the Vikings have given up just eight goals.

"Our defense has been superb all year," Evaul said. "We have a strong chemistry on our back line, and we've been able to shut teams down. Hopefully, we can repeat the effort on Saturday."

Junior Mary Chestnut Smith is Avery's biggest weapon. According to Evaul, she has scored 35 goals with 30 assists this season. Emily Banner has scored more than 20 goals with more than 20 assists. Defensively, the Vikings have posted 16 shutouts.

"Of course, Mary and Emily get most of the attention," Evaul said. "But we have a strong core of players that have made this possible. Everyone on this team has a role, and they have fulfilled those roles very well.

"I have dedicated this season to my players, and they have just put together a terrific season."

And winning a state title is the ultimate goal.

“It would be nice to win a state championship,” he said. “We’ve had individual champions in tennis and wrestling, but we’ve never had a team title in the history of our school. It would be nice for the school and our community. We’ll give it our best shot.”

Wellborn has Blackhawks in regional finals

Former Watauga High baseball player and coach Ben Wellborn is one win away from taking his team to a state championship game.

West Wilkes (20-10) moved a step closer to its goal by pounding Bishop McGuinness 12-4 in game one of its best of three series in the Class 1A Western Regional Finals. The Blackhawks hit four home runs in that game. Grafton Church went deep twice. Logan Hallock picked up his fifth win of the year.

Game two will be played Saturday morning at 11 am in Millers Creek. Game three, if necessary, will follow.

West Wilkes hasn’t been to the state finals since 1987. The Blackhawks lost to Greene Central in a three-game series that year.