

## Smith is stellar at state games

Written by Mike Kelly  
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Mary Chestnut Smith may not have scored this past weekend at the North Carolina State Games High School Soccer Showcase at Queens University in Charlotte.

But she certainly raised some eyebrows with the college scouts. Smith, a rising senior at Avery High who scored 33 goals this past year, played for the West all-stars and turned in a solid performance on Sunday afternoon in the bronze-medal game. She had four shots on goal, and nearly tallied twice.

"It took her a game to adjust herself to this group," said West coach Jason Dragoon (the head men's and women's soccer coach at East Lincoln High), "but when she did, Mary Chestnut put on a great show. She's an all-everything player for Avery. And those talents really came out on Sunday."

The West dropped a 1-0 decision to the North in the bronze-medal matchup, but Smith did an excellent job holding her own against some of the elite players in the state.

"Mary Chestnut is very raw," Dragoon said. "But she is extremely talented. It doesn't take long for her to adjust her game to the level of talent she's up against. She has great speed, and she's also very strong, especially on the ball in the box.

"She has a nose for the net, and she has the ability to produce results. I can see why Avery depends on her so much."

The South defeated the West 4-2 in the opening round Saturday morning. Shenny Lenhart of A.C. Reynolds and Chelsea Hamrick of Crest scored for the West.

"And we had our chances," Dragoon said. "We really peppered the net, but it wouldn't go in. But I'll tell you what. We won the gold medal last summer, but this team was a lot of fun to coach.

"And this team really grew together in three days time. Heck, we get nine of them back next season (including Smith) and they're all legitimate college players. And Smith really made it enjoyable. She has a great sense of humor and it really kept the team loose. I really loved coaching this group."

Smith, Hamrick and Lenhart were also joined by Hannah Sizemore and Marissa McCord of T.C. Roberson, Alyssa Starnes and Sabrina Summers of St. Stephens and Kayla Stamey of Hibriten. Stamey did not play on Sunday because of other obligations, and Sydney Maddox of A.C. Reynolds missed the tournament because of an injury.

Former Watauga High assistant coach and current Hickory men's and women's coach Brian Jillings coached the West men and led them to a silver medal. The West played the East to a 1-1 tie in the gold-medal game, but lost the title 5-4 on penalty kicks. Michael Andreski of Wilkes Central, Austin Wyman and Andrew Carlson of A.C. Reynolds, Paul Egle of T.C. Roberson, Jacob Crisp of Draughn and Adam Betzweiser of Hickory played for the West men.

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### **Saturday - June 26**

South-Women 4, West-Women 2

South-Men 2, West-Men 2 (the West won on penalty kicks 4-3)

East-Men 1, North-Men 0

East-Women 2, North-Women 1

### **Sunday - June 27**

Women's Bronze Medal Game-North 1, West 0

Men's Bronze Medal Game-North 3, South 2

Men's Gold Medal Game-East 1, West 1 (East wins 5-4 on PK)

Women's Gold Medal Game-South 1, East 0