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## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW THIS SEASON

**Knights' day** With a deep and talented returning roster that won the Beach District and Eastern Region tournaments, Kellam stands as the top team in South Hampton Roads. The Knights must address the graduation of first-team all-state defender Mikayla Plansker. Riley Mahoney (Marshall) and Abby Morgan will vie for that center-back role along with midfielder Gaela Normile. Midfielder Carly Goldsborough (Old Dominion), Helene Schillo and leading scorer Alex Askew hope to bring the offense up to speed for a state title run. Coach Mario Hurdle believes the team's biggest obstacle, though, is not wavering from the blue-collar mentality that got them so far last season.

**Hawks have depth** Ten seniors and seven juniors lead a Hickory team looking to become just the second Southeastern squad to win the Eastern Region title (Grassfield in 2011). The Hawks' top seven scorers return, including dynamic midfielder Payton Ormsby (Campbell). The defense – despite first-team All-Tidewater Sierra Merkes' graduation – remains stout with Lindsey Ferguson, Jacqueline Kim and Jessi Pinello. Keeper Vicki Fenley (Emory & Henry) and sophomore forward Kelly Coleman return.

**Elsewhere in the Southeastern** At Grassfield, defender Caroline Hollandsworth (Randolph-Macon) is one of two seniors expected to keep the Grizzlies fighting for a Southeastern District title. Junior Caren Cowley, up from junior varsity, will handle shot-stopping duties, while the Grizzlies could see scoring from juniors Peyton Reisch and Madeline Jackson or freshman Kylie Barnes. At Western Branch Ella Bonner is coming off a fabulous freshman season. Leading scorers Lindsay Ransome and Aneisha Federico return for King's Fork and Deep Creek, respectively. Indian River's Katelyn Admire (Tulsa) and Taylor Potter are back from injuries.

**Falcons rebuild** Conventional thinking would have Group AAA semifinalist Cox taking a step back this year following the graduation of the area's best senior class. But these are the Falcons and there is a tradition to uphold. Watch for seniors Melanie Oakes (Old Dominion) and Ashley Whited (Radford) and junior Kaitlynn Klamut to get involved offensively.

**Cavs' stopper returns** Princess Anne junior goalkeeper Nikki Bottoms returns. "She's made plays I've only seen guys make," coach Jenn Denkler said. While it was easy to pull back and play defensive with Bottoms in net last season, Denkler hopes for more of an attacking style this year. Senior midfielder SierraLynn Johnson (College of Saint Rose), back from tearing her ACL the game before the district tournament, and freshman forward Simone Marshall should help.

**Elsewhere in the Beach District** A disappointing finish has bred a potential turnaround at Ocean Lakes. The Dolphins were No. 3 in the area last preseason but limped to a seventh-place finish in the Beach District. Senior Katisha Browne, who led the team in scoring her sophomore year, returns after missing her junior season because of an ACL tear. Grace Haverly (Old Dominion), Hannah Hall and Olivia Bethune also return. At First Colonial senior goalkeeper Lindsay Nahorney and senior forward Kelly Chesson return. Nahorney combined for nine shutouts last season with Caroline Robinson, now a junior. Bayside will rely on goalie Emma Halvorsen (VCU) and Meredith Reisinger (Air Force). Landstown welcomes back leading scorer Gabby Swinson (ACL).

**'Cats are back** Great Bridge caught fire in the postseason, shaking off a fourth-place district finish to make the Eastern Region semifinals. Rebooting that momentum shouldn't be too difficult with most of the key cogs returning, namely midfielders Nickie Ivey (Longwood) and Corinne Perry. The defense is a patchwork but it's helped by keeper Whitney Lewis.

**Chiefs' star returns** Kempsville senior forward Ashley Weidner (Longwood) torched defenses last season, scoring two or more goals five times, including a four-goal outing. Speedy defender Gabby Soares (Lynchburg College) will help.

**Bulldogs are young** A formidable non-conference schedule in 2011 put Norfolk Academy in an 0-7 hole. That schedule lightened this year for a young roster that may have trouble scoring. Kelley Smith (High Point) was a first-team All-VISAA Division I player last year as a junior.

**Elsewhere in the TCIS** Defending conference champion Bishop Sullivan is reeling following the loss of Jessica Wilson and Sammy Banks, who combined for nearly 50 goals in 2012. Senior Allie Branum remains an offensive threat, while seniors Danielle Goldberg and Julia Culbertson give the Crusaders a strong back line. Norfolk Collegiate and Cape Henry bring new coaches in Kai Evans and Tina Lowry, respectively. Norfolk Christian returns 19-goal scorer Haley Ballou.

**Commodores grew up** Maury's stellar freshmen class ran into a red-hot Great Bridge team in last season's Eastern Region quarterfinals, but with a year of experience, they could lead the Commodores to new heights.

Darby Moore netted a South Hampton Roads-high 32 goals. Three other freshmen – Sarah Mariano, Cristina Bashara and Jenny Wilson – finished in the top four in scoring. Mariano recently suffered an ankle injury but should be back for the postseason. Jordan Johnson returns from a second ACL tear that forced her to miss her sophomore season. She led Maury in scoring two years ago.

Elsewhere in the Eastern Lake Taylor started off last season 10-0-1, a school record that included the program's first win over Granby. As a junior, Asia Burleson scored 18 goals for the Titans, who lost the rematch to the Comets in the district semis. Granby should be improved with the return of midfielder Kara Mason, who led the Comets to the district tournament title as a sophomore before missing last season with an ACL tear. Olivia Duran also returns.

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VIRGINIAN-PILOT FILE PHOTO

Helene Schillo was part of a Kellam team that last year won the Eastern Region title.

## by the numbers

38 Goals scored by Alani Johnson in her freshman and sophomore campaigns at Bayside. She has transferred to Cape Henry and could boost the Dolphins into TCIS title consideration.

6 Playoff goals scored by Kellam forward Helene Schillo, part of the Knights' run to the Beach District and Eastern Region title. She finished with 11 total.