

A championship season

Bengals start season slowly, but Gomes leads team to greatness that ends with another 5A crown

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- Coach Mark Stoker

By Bruce Smith
Matchup

The Brighton girls soccer team came a long way during the 2013 season.

It started with the team's first game - a 2-1 loss to a 4A school (Maple Mountain). Coach Mark Stoker remembered the long, dejected faces of the girls as they came off the field.

Three months later, those frowns had been turned upside down as the Bengals celebrated the school's sixth state championship. In-between, Brighton lost just one other time and finished the year by dominating their opponents in the 5A state tournament.

It ended with a 1-0 victory over Viewmont at Rio Tinto Stadium in Sandy.

"The state championship was a huge accomplishment," said Stoker. "Our fitness was incredible. Toward the end of the season, we were able to push through."

During the season, the Bengals battled injuries and finished second to rival Alta in Region 3 play. However, by state, they were at full strength and the Bengals blanked all four of their opponents. Sydney Myers' second-half goal put the finishing touch on a 16-2-1 season, and the Bengals



celebrated joyously afterward.

"The bus (ride home) was especially crazy," Stoker said. "I was only able to quiet them

Brighton players and coaches were all smiles at the end of the 5A state tournament. Here, they show their excitement while celebrating the championship by accepting the UHSAA trophy following their 1-0 victory over Viewmont at Rio Tinto Stadium.

Continued on next page



Brighton players celebrate with their fans after winning 5A title.

Continued from previous page

down once. It was wild ... there was music and dancing.

"It was a great atmosphere."

Afterward, the TV station Fox-13 came to Brighton, and the Bengals' fellow students honored the team at halftime of a Brighton football game. The Bengals were also named by Maxpreps.com as one of the top teams in the country and senior Nadia Gomes earned both Salt Lake newspaper's Most Valuable Player awards.

"She was our silent leader," Stoker said. "She naturally filled that spot. She motivated the team and made great plays."

Gomes and Jocelyn Loomis tied for the team lead with 16 goals each. Most of Loomis's scoring exploits came early in the season, while Gomes dominated late. In fact, she scored six goals in three postseason games, including three in a 5-0 win over Fremont in the semifinal.

Gomes, Myers, Loomis and Stephanie Ringwood, Breanna Rueckert and goalkeeper Tamaryn Braun all earned postseason honors. Braun teamed with Carly Olsen to post six shutouts, but was especially impressive in the final games.

Those awards were just one of many

Season highlights

- * - **SIXTH** state championship in Brighton girls soccer history.
- * - **16-2-1** season record
- * - **NAMED** one of the top 10 high school girls soccer teams in the country by Maxpreps.com.
- * - **OUTSCORED** opponents 16-0 during 5A state tournament run.
- * - **TEAM CAPTAINS** were Sydney Myers, Jocelyn Loomis, Jayde Jones and Kami Djahanbani.

Team awards

- BENGAL OF THE SEASON** – Nadia Gomes
- EYE OF THE TIGER** – Jocelyn Loomis
- DEFENSIVE PROWESS** – Bree Rueckert
- LEADERSHIP** – Jayde Jones
- MOST IMPROVED** – Katelynn Mortensen
- COACHES CHOICE** – Becky Fuller
- TEAM SPIRIT** – Tatum Lefler

memorable events of the championship season, which started in early August with tryouts only a few days before the opener against Maple Mountain. The 2-1 loss to the Golden Eagles (who became a 4A power) was disappointing, but Stoker noted that the team was still learning to play together and the outcome only motivated the squad.

The Bengals also broke in a new field. After playing at Albion Middle School during 2012, the new field at Butler Middle School became available in time for the region opener against West Jordan.

"We were ready for it," Stoker said. "They had said it would be ready in time for the start of the season and we had some problems with it. The proximity to the school was so beneficial."

Stoker said the team was filled with talent, but the title could not have been won without the chemistry that developed. The new soccer field, the difficult preseason schedule and the two games against rival Alta are probably what the players will remember. However, Stoker's difficult workout sessions for the girls on Saturday mornings, the community assistance activities at the Christmas Box House, bowling and, of course, the postseason accolades provided the best memories off the field.