



**Reirden let go**  
Former Penguins assistant coach Todd Reirden was fired by the Capitals Sunday. B2

## Cougars to rely on strength of young players

The Charleroi girls soccer team has eight freshmen on its fall roster.

By **JOSE NEGRON**  
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A few things stand out when taking a gander at the Charleroi girls soccer team's fall roster.

First and foremost, the Cougars are dealing with a limited number of players for the fourth year in a row. They currently have 13 players on their roster and of those players, two are seniors, one is a junior and two are sophomores.

A youth movement has come to Charleroi, however, as a whopping eight freshmen are set to join the program. All eight are expected to compete at a high level and serve as leaders almost instantly.

"I've been looking forward to getting these girls up at the high school level for a few years now," Charleroi head coach Traci Fleming said. "They've got four years to look forward to and they're only going to get stronger, better and faster. They are just amazing to watch."

Many of Fleming's freshmen have been playing together for quite some time at the cup level. Because of their camaraderie and ability to play off one another, Fleming believes positive results will come sooner rather than later.

"They know their moves before their teammate is going to make it at this point," Fleming said. "They all work so well together and they're very encouraging. Even though they are the younger girls on the



Charleroi forward Bella Carroto (left) and midfielder McKenna "Boots" DeUnger are among the eight freshmen set to join the Cougars for the fall season. Charleroi has 13 total players on its roster.



Jenn Codeluppi / MVI Sports

team, they have to bring some of the older, less experienced girls up to their level, so they have worked very well with them."

While Fleming is excited about the influx of young players ready to join the fold at the high school level, she doesn't have a ton of depth to rely on.

A lack of numbers at the youth and middle school levels have left the Cougars looking for more in years

past. Meanwhile, the young players will be counted upon to soak up a majority of the playing time, leaving them more susceptible to injuries and fatigue.

"No matter how strong we are, I feel like I'm always struggling to get those two or three more players to give us a more solid team because these freshmen are going to get beat up this year. It's hard when you're playing three games a week

and you don't get to come out for a break," Fleming said. "I'm just worried about the injuries and keeping them safe and healthy throughout the season."

This fall, the Cougars will be led offensively by the freshman duo of Bella Carroto and McKenna "Boots" DeUnger. Carroto will have the opportunity to make her presence felt at the forward position, while DeUnger will lead the

midfield.

"A lot of (the scoring) is going to fall on Bella Carroto's shoulders. She is a natural forward," Fleming said. "McKenna's nickname is 'boots' and when you have that type of nickname, you know you already have some big shoes to fill. She will control the midfield for me and I am going to rely on her for scoring as well."

COUGARS • B3

## Yough girls still plan to contend in 2A

Despite losing a plethora of seniors, the Cougars still have a ton of talent left on their roster.

By **JONATHAN GUTH**  
MVI Sports

Yough lost a tremendous amount of scoring, defense and goalkeeping from last year's team that played in the WPIAL championship game, but ninth-year head coach Dann Appolonia is confident his squad can be just as solid this upcoming season.

Appolonia, a Ringgold graduate, led the Cougars to the girls' district final in Class 2A last year for the first time in program history. Yough lost the match, 1-0, in double overtime to North Catholic, and then saw its magical season come to an end in the first round of the PIAA playoffs to Villa Maria out of Erie by a score of 4-2. The Cougars finished their season at 17-3-1 and were 10-1-1 in Section 3.

Yough had eight of its seniors from last year's team graduate, including Justine Appolonia, who is the Cougars' all-time leading scorer with 118 career goals. Appolonia, who had 33 tallies and 21 assists last year, is now playing soccer at Youngstown State.

Justine's twin-sister, Gianna, was an All-WPIAL and All-Section performer at midfield. Yough also needs to replace All-WPIAL and All-Section defender Amber Biros, who is playing for Carlow University. Hadley Sleith, who was on the backline, was named to the All-Section team, and is continuing to play in college for Clarion University.

The Cougars will have a new keeper starting, as



Ben Bamford / MVI Sports

Yough's McKenzie Pritts returns for her sophomore season after scoring 25 goals last season en route to being named the Mon Valley Independent-BeeGraphix Fab 15 Newcomer of the Year.

All-Section performer Sara Krofchek graduated. Krofchek had eight clean sheets and made 95 saves last year.

"We did lose a lot of seniors, but I am encouraged by what I'm seeing in the early part of the year here," coach Appolonia said. "We lost those players, but by no means was the cupboard bare. We have some very strong returning players who contributed last year, and we have a lot of girls that, in my opinion, didn't see a whole lot of time last year, but it was only because there were so many strong players in front of them."

"I think in my nine years of coaching here, there was probably only one other year where we had that strong of a team. In most years at

Yough, those girls would have been starters or heavy contributors. They are waiting in the wing and chomping at the bit to step up."

Despite losing five key pieces of a championship-caliber squad, Appolonia believes the newly-inserted starters will be able to jump right in where those players left off last year.

"I go into every year and say, 'There is going to be a champion, and there is no reason why it can't be us,'" Appolonia said. "We want to make sure we not only get to the playoffs, but we make a run. We have had years where we were knocked out in the first round. We never had a period where we were knocked out of the playoffs multiple years in a row."

"I think, in every class, we've had girls that had an experience of a deep run in the playoffs. Last year, it was the first time making it to the finals, but it was our third time in the past eight years of making to the semifinals. Yough has been in the playoffs 10 years straight, so anytime you put that type of run together, that type of expectation is there, and you are never just happy to get to the playoffs."

Yough had many talented players that didn't see as much action last year due to the team being loaded with ability, but Appolonia gives a great deal of credit to those individuals for pushing the starters in practice.

"There were players who

YOUGH • B2



## EF football shut down due to potential COVID-19 exposure

The team will not be able to start heat acclimation practices until Friday.

By **JOSE NEGRON**  
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While the Elizabeth Forward football team has shut down practices due to a possible exposure to COVID-19, players are expected to return to the field later this week.

Superintendent Dr. Todd Kerskin said a high school student recently tested positive for the virus, and protocols from the Allegheny County Health Department are being followed.

"There was a possible exposure, so all the parents and coaches that could have been exposed were contacted and we're following a 14-day quarantine," said Kerskin, adding that the quarantine period will conclude Friday.

Heat acclimation practices

are slated to begin today after the PIAA voted Friday to allow fall sports to go on as scheduled despite Gov. Tom Wolf's recommendation to postpone all recreational and interscholastic sports until Jan. 1.

EF won't be able to start its heat practices until Friday and will have to continue them into next week. PIAA rules state teams must go through five straight days of heat practices before being allowed to work in full pads.

EF's football team isn't the only local team to have practices shut down due to potential exposure to the coronavirus.

Days after the Belle Vernon Area cheerleading squad and volleyball team canceled practice until Sept. 2, the girls soccer team also shut down practices, according to BVA Athletic Director Matt Humbert.

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# Six Steelers players miss practice due to testing concerns

James Conner, Maurkice Pouncey and Stephon Tuitt were among the players absent from Saturday night's practice.

By **JOE RUTTER**  
Trib Total Media

Six Pittsburgh Steelers players were absent from practice Saturday night at Heinz Field because of coronavirus testing irregularities, but general manager Kevin Colbert said Sunday that all have been cleared to attend team activities.

"None of those players were required to be placed on Reserve/COVID-19 and will be returning to meetings today and practice on Monday," Colbert said in a statement.

The Steelers conducted a night practice at Heinz Field. Among the players that did not practice were running back James Conner, center Maurkice Pouncey, defensive end Stephon Tuitt, guard David DeCastro, safety Terrell Edmunds and wide receiver Diontae Johnson. All but Pouncey were on the field during practice, and DeCastro, Edmunds and Johnson



**Steelers head coach Mike Tomlin is pictured during practice last week in Pittsburgh.**

previously had missed practice time because of injury.

Coach Mike Tomlin acknowledged Saturday night that some of his players did not practice because they

were "caught up in COVID procedures," but he did not provide specifics.

"We are going to exercise all caution like we normally do and make sure that we ad-

here to it to the fullest," Tomlin said.

The NFL released a statement Sunday after the league's daily coronavirus testing returned several posi-

tive results from teams using the same laboratory in New Jersey.

"We are working with our testing partner, BioReference, to investigate these results, while the clubs work to confirm or rule out the positive tests," the NFL said. "Clubs are taking immediate precautionary measures as outlined in the NFL-NFL-PA's health and safety protocols to include contact tracing, isolation of individuals and temporarily adjusting the schedule, where appropriate. The other laboratories used for NFL testing have not had similar results."

The NFL uses BioReference for all coronavirus testing, but labs across the country handle the tests so teams can get results within 24 hours.

The New York Jets revealed they had 10 false positives from testing, and the Chicago Bears reported nine such cases. The Jets canceled a walk-through Saturday but practiced Sunday after the previous positive tests were negative upon retesting. The Bears pushed back their scheduled practice time a few hours, and the Cleveland Browns canceled a planned

workout Sunday.

The Browns said in a statement that results indicated multiple "presumptive positive cases" that included coaches, players and support personnel.

Buffalo Bills general manager Brandon Beane was told his team was one of "10 or 11" dealing with potential false positives because of testing that had gone "haywire."

The Steelers placed four players on the reserve/COVID-19 list during the initial testing phase at the beginning of training camp. No player spent more than a week on the list, and the Steelers haven't had a player test positive in the ensuing two weeks of conditioning and practices. Padded workouts began July 28.

"The league is doing a great job," veteran defensive end Tyson Alualu said. "I know they are learning from this. It's probably better that they catch this early on and kind of take care of it, which I know they will. It's tough. You never want to be a false positive and miss some of the important reps, whether it's at practice or especially on game day."

## COUGARS FROM B1

"They work well together. I have never seen two players play off of each other as well as I've seen these two girls work together. They just know where to be and where the other one is going to be 100% of the time on the field."

Charleroi's forward group also includes freshman Marissa Stiffy, sophomore Lesley Vasquez and junior Emily Bittner. Joining DeUnger as midfielders on the Cougars roster are sophomore Sophia Iacovino and seniors Madison Duhon and Shaley Barber.

Defensively, Charleroi is faced with having to replace former standout Olexia Johnson. Fleming will do so with four first-year high school players.

Freshman Taylor Ramsdale is expected to lead a defensive unit that also consists of classmates Camryn Musser, Ella Sypolt and Aralyn Hartley.

"Taylor will fall right into (Lexi's) spot. She is one of the best defensive backs I have seen come along in a long time," Fleming said. "She is strong with both her right and left foot, she's smart and she knows how to get down and play good defense. She just has it all."

In addition to her role on defense, Fleming noted that Musser will likely serve as a valuable asset in the midfield, too.

"She is a very skilled player with a lot of speed that I want to utilize," Fleming added.

For the third straight season, Fleming is faced with having to find a new goalkeeper.

And she believes she's found a good one in Addison Conrad, a freshman who has never played the position before.

"When you're looking for a keeper, it's hard with girls because not every girl wants to get in net. Addison stepped up big time for us this summer," Fleming said. "I hate to lose her speed on the field, but when you have a kid looking at you saying, 'I'll go in the net, coach,' you have to try and put them in there."

Conrad has benefited this summer from the tutelage of former Charleroi standout Sydney Toth.

Toth, who has joined Fleming's staff as an assistant coach, has worked with Conrad as the young keeper prepares to make her debut in net.

"The mental toughness is the first step, but Syd has been working with her on the basics," Fleming said. "It's a lot to catch up on at the high school level and we have been working her hard, but she has hung in there with us. I think we are going to be very surprised with how well she does."

Last season marked the end of an impressive streak for the Charleroi girls soccer program.

The Cougars finished the year with a 4-10 overall record and 4-8 mark in Section 2-A before missing out on the playoffs for the first time since 2009.

Now, Charleroi is looking to play postseason soccer once again.

Standing in its way are Section 2 foes Bentworth, Beth-Center, Chartiers-Houston, Geibel Catholic, Monessen, Seton LaSalle and Steel Valley.

"It's always my goal to get to the playoffs. It was disheartening last year to not make it even though the girls put everything they had into it," said Fleming. "I'm excited to get back into play this year because I think we have a good shot."

## Polanco leads Bucs to sweep of Brewers

By **JERRY DIPAOLA**  
Trib Total Media

When the rain moved out of PNC Park after an 85-minute delay to start the game Sunday afternoon, prospects looked bright for another Pittsburgh Pirates victory.

And after a mid-game hiccup, Gregory Polanco, whose bat has come alive in recent games, belted a two-run homer off the Milwaukee Brewers' David Phelps in the eighth inning — the decisive blow in the 5-4 victory. It was

Polanco's fourth home run of the season and second in two days.

The Pirates (7-17) swept the three-game series, their first sweep of the season. Richard Rodriguez worked a one-two-three ninth inning to earn his second career save.

Early in the game, the suddenly resurgent Pirates bats opened a 2-0 lead with single runs in the first and second innings. Adam Frazier and Jarrod Dyson provided RBI singles after a leadoff double by Erik Gonzalez in the first and a

single and stolen base by Polanco to start the second.

That gave the Pirates runs in six of the past seven innings after their 12-5 victory Saturday.

Starter JT Brubaker also offered hope, getting 10 outs (five strikeouts) before allowing a hit.

By the sixth inning, the Brewers had a 4-2 lead, first chasing Brubaker with single runs in the fourth and fifth on an RBI double by Justin Smoak and a run-scoring single by Omar Narvaez.

Geoff Hartlieb relieved Brubaker in the fifth and pitched out of trouble by getting Orlando Arcia to ground into a double play and striking out Christian Yelich on an 86-mph slider.

But a throwing error by third baseman JT Riddle and a two-run homer off the left-field foul pole by Smoak gave the Brewers their first lead.

The Pirates added a run in the sixth when Riddle doubled ahead of Bryan Reynolds' RBI single.



**Gregory Polanco, right, celebrates with Colin Moran (19) after driving in with a two-run home run against the Brewers in the fourth inning Sunday.**

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