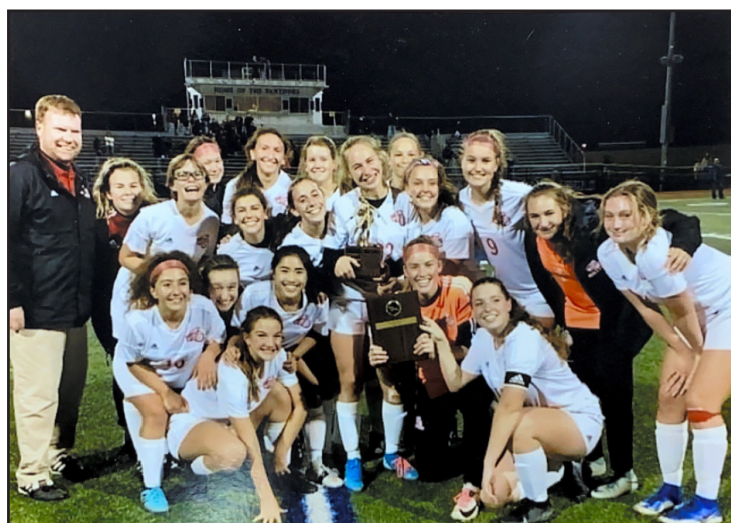


Well Played—Red Hook Central School District’s Soccer Teams

By Thea Burgess , HRH Second Vice President, November 9, 2021

Not quite a quarter century old, the Red Hook Central School District soccer program has proven its mettle. Both the boys’ and the girls’ teams have won a sectional title and numerous league honors. Both teams feature students named as all stars and players of the year. Both teams have members who played in college and who remain involved in the sport. Red Hook’s soccer program may have had hardscrabble beginnings, but it rapidly rose to the top of the league. The successful playbook has many pages, according to former Athletic Director Andy Seidel: coaches who also teach in the district and thus connect with their squads, coaching philosophies that emphasize winning of course but also focus on fun, hard working kids, strong parental support, and fans in the community who cheer at games long after their favorite players have graduated. The 2021 season is over, and yet again both teams qualified for sectionals. The future burns bright for the squads and their coaches.

Success is measured in many ways. One is results. The boys’ varsity team has earned four league titles and one sectional crown in 2021. The girls have won ten league championships and one sectional crown in 2006. Numerous team members have been named players of the year and gone on to play at the collegiate level. Team academic and sportsmanship honors abound. A commonality? All of the varsity players have been coached by boys’ coach Steve Sutton and girls’ coach Jason Pavlich.



2019 RHCS D Girls' Soccer Team

Coaching Philosophies

The coaches’ approaches to the game are similar. The duo emphasizes that players give their all on the field. Most importantly, both leaders want the sport to be fun. “I have been really lucky to have a steady stream of good players come through, so my big challenge has been figuring out how to get them together on the field. I always hope that players remember more than the wins and losses,” says Sutton. The program was on the right track when the boys qualified for the Section 9 tournament in its second season, and it’s been in the tournament every year since.

Pavlich concurs. “Each year we have certain expectations as a team. I want them to be competing to win. We have to put in the work to make it happen, but we may come out losing. Even with the desire and the hard work, it doesn’t mean winning is always going to happen. We’ve got to be willing to take the disappointments, too. I want us to compete for titles, obviously, but I want them to know that they don’t have to have the title to feel validated.” Pavlich notes there are many, many players who have contributed to the

program's success over the years. The philosophy pays off. Currently, ten former girls' varsity players are playing at the college level—either on collegiate or intramural teams.



*2007 Varsity Girls Soccer Coaches: Jason Pavlich, Devon Tomson; Front Row: Danielle Deschaine, Sandita McDermott; Second Row: Stephanie Bayer, Allie Orlando, Karen Lams, Sara Croft, Kate Frick; Third Row: Kaitlyn Murray, Emma Dowden, Lara Farringer, Heylan Tsumagari, Jenn Picard, Marin McDermott; Fourth Row: Megan Dowling, Allie Martin, Kaylea Parkin, Cassidy Blundell, Morgan Reither, Louise Frick, Victoria Howland, Aileen Dolen. This image is from our school yearbook collection! We are missing a few years, and are looking to fill in the gaps. Have any of the following years and willing to donate a copy to our collection? : 1982, 1987, 1989, 1993-1999, 2003-2006, 2008-2020
Let us know! info@historicredhook.org.*

Grace Hennig

One girls' team standout is Grace Hennig, class of 2021, who is playing Division I soccer at Marist College, where she is a biology-med major and is aspiring to be a physician's assistant. "All the experiences I've had with Red Hook soccer have been nothing but good. My best friends Morgan Tompkins, Erika Ljutich, and Kelcie Horst and I would have the most fun practices together...I've gone through tough times with Red Hook soccer too. Losing to Minisink in section finals two years in a row was the worst feeling, but I was grateful to have the best teammates and best coach to be there for me." While Hennig is playing at Marist, her sister Mia and brother James currently are on the Red Hook varsity squads.

Caitlin Swanson

Caitlin Swanson, who graduated in 2013, fell in love with the sport when she began playing soccer around age four or five,



Grace Hennig (center) and her family after signing to play for Marist

adding she “was lucky to have had great teammates and coaches which kept me playing.” Beyond the successful seasons, Caitlin jokes that Pavlich will remember her team every time he walks into his chemistry lab: “Our senior year gift to Pav was a life-size cutout of him. Rumor has it, it’s still in his classroom.” Having played midfield in college, Swanson graduated from Clarkson University in 2017 with a degree in chemical engineering and now is working at GE Gas Power in Greenville, South Carolina.



Caitlin Swanson

Marin McDermott

Another leader was Marin McDermott, who played one year on junior varsity and four years on the varsity squad. McDermott recalls undefeated seasons and scoring lots of goals—118 to be exact, she says. After graduating in 2008, she played for the University of Pennsylvania. When she graduated from Penn in 2011, her career stats were impressive: she had played in 68 games, started in 62, scored 22 goals, and had nine assists. McDermott, whose sister Sandita played alongside her on the Red Hook varsity team and went on to play collegiate soccer at Bucknell, says, “No team felt like home the way that RH soccer felt. The focus was always on teamwork. How to help each other more or fight for each other harder. We figured out our strengths, and we committed to playing to those strengths. That is what made us a truly effective team.” Another key? Singing “Ain’t No Mountain High Enough” on the bus rides to the games,



Marin McDermott playing at Penn State

even if it annoyed their coach. There was a disappoint, she laughs, when Coach Pavlich told the team that he had proposed to his wife Brandy, and no, the team could not be flower girls at the wedding. McDermott still plays soccer weekly. She is a manufacturing leader for W. L. Gore and Associates in Flagstaff, Arizona, but Red Hook remains close to her heart. McDermott credits her achievements to her early coaches like Mr. Dolan, her family (her father played in college and an older brother played for the boys’ team), and the town itself: “The passion and support for the program within the community is astounding. I truly believe it is the reason the girls’ soccer team is so successful year over year.”

Boys’ Results

Sutton’s former players have fared just as well. Six recent grads are currently playing at the collegiate level. Worried that he has left some players out, Sutton mentions Dan Riso, Erik Brudvig, Steve Croft, John Marchessault, brothers Tim and Jeff Kiluba, brothers Tyler and Zach Sivulich, and Kyle Murphy as all having played on college teams, with Kevin Hourihan going to nationals with his Villanova club team three times. Riso, who played for Hobart, was named Liberty League Player of the Year his senior year, leading

the team to the national quarterfinals. Murphy, who still plays professionally, played at Clemson from 2011–2015 and helped them win the Atlantic Coast Championship in 2014. In his senior year, Murphy's team made it to the national championship, unfortunately losing to Stanford. Former players also have gone on to coach including Tim Holsopple and Dave Jutton. The soccer program impacts players in other ways; when Ryan DuPont was on the squad, his Eagle Scout project was to design and build the covered bench areas where the home and away teams sit during matches.



2001 Boys Soccer. Standing: Coach Steve Sutton, Zach Fisher, Luke Franek, Marco Carvajal, Matt Vaughan, Jordan Valentine, Dan Riso, Pat Dunn, Steve Croft, Peter Scibelli, Christian Nielsen, Brett Palfreyman. Kneeling: Hang Joo Lee, Wes Marshall, Ryan Patrick, Tim Pervisi, Eric Brudvig, David Jutton, Joo Sung.

Dave Jutton

One of the program's pioneers, Jutton played on the first modified team in 1997, the first JV team in 1998, and the first varsity team in 1999. "We learned a lot," he says, "and by 2002, we were playing in the league championship." Jutton, too, started out playing at a young age with the soccer league at Mill Road School on weekends which he says morphed into him playing on a travel team that went up and down the Taconic Parkway every weekend. "We had a great coach in Don Germain who taught us a lot and made soccer fun at a young age." Jutton adds of Coach Sutton, "I always looked forward to his advice and stories—and still do! He gave us ownership of the team. Many of my best friendships growing up were born on the soccer field." Playing conditions fieldwise improved as the program took root. "When the fields were put in at the high school, it was like heaven to play there, and I still remember Erik Brudvig lying on the grass doing snow angels (even though there was no snow) because of how nice and lush the grass was for our MHAL (Mid Hudson Athletic League) semifinal match at Cantine Field." Jutton helped start a girls' varsity soccer program at Coleman High School in Kingston and says he was lucky to coach the team to two Section 9 championships. Another highlight for Jutton was returning to be an assistant coach for the Red Hook varsity team that was league co-champions, and on that team was Murphy.

Kyle Murphy

Murphy remembers going to the Bard Summer soccer camp starting when he was four or five and begging his mother to let him stay all day to play with the older kids. He, too, recalls Coach Sutton and Coach Pavlich being there “to help me get better and to be there for me in my soccer career.” Another memory was winning the MHAL Championship his senior year. “As a team, we would eat at ‘The Bagel Shoppe’ every game day morning, which was something we all looked forward to, and we made it a tradition. I remember vividly games against Rhinebeck under the lights at Bard. There was always something special about those games at night with a big crowd.” Murphy says the entire soccer program is a huge family.

“Whenever I see guys from teams I have played on, we always bring up old memories from playing together.” When Murphy is in town, he tries to catch a game, this time sitting in the stands. “I remember some of the other alumni doing that as well, and I’ve always gotten a family atmosphere from the entire soccer program.” Coach Sutton and Coach Pavlich have returned the favor; they support Murphy to this day, he says. “In my college years at Clemson, they saw multiple games of mine, and I love having them there to watch.” Now playing professionally for the Memphis 901 FC of the USL Championship, Murphy just closed out 2021 play, helping his club make it to the playoffs. He scored 21 goals over the season; this achievement has him tied for the most goals scored in a single season in the history of professional soccer in Tennessee, according to his club. He also set club records with single-season scoring leader with 21 goals and single-season shots leader with 71.



2010 Year book, Boy's Varsity Soccer

Lasting Connections

The other way to measure success? Friendships. The connections among players and coaches, no matter the record at the end of the season, are another way to win. Current Red Hook Athletic Director Tom Cassata says, “Having consistent quality coaching has a direct correlation to success on the field. Coach Sutton and Coach Pavlich both coach a very structured system that the kids are able to easily grasp and create results. I also believe that their friendship is a huge plus. They are always talking soccer and strategies and will offer each other support and help throughout the season.” Support and friendships for the players continue after graduation. Seidel points out that Pavlich tries to go to a college soccer game of each of his former players each season, and the visits include homemade cookies sent along by Pavlich’s wife Brandy (Knull), who was a member of Red Hook’s state championship team in field hockey. (Swanson attests to the power of the cookies, too.) These ingredients are essential, as is starting to play early, such as with the town program and Red Hook Soccer Club, according to so many of the former players.

The Red Hook Soccer Club Forms

An impetus for the school teams' origins was the Red Hook Soccer Club, a group of soccer enthusiasts who created a nonprofit organization to get kids playing early on. Run solely by volunteers, the group submitted its application charter on February 2, 1993, and was certified on April 5, 1993, with Jennifer Skov as president, Susan Taylor as vice president, Diana Germain as secretary, and Ellen Phelan as treasurer, explains current club president James Onnembo. Marc Molinaro and Don Germain also playing important roles in its establishment, recalls current coach Sutton. The *Poughkeepsie Journal's* February 25, 1993, edition announced "Registration for the spring 1993 season of the Red Hook Soccer Club will take place from 9 a.m.-12 noon at the Red Hook Town Hall on Saturday, Feb. 27. Registration fee is \$25 per child (not to exceed \$50 per family)." The all-volunteer group is still thriving with about 350 children participating annually in the intramural and travel team programs under a rotating board of directors, according to Onnembo, and the club's 30-year anniversary is upcoming in 2023. The soccer club was one of the catalyzing forces for the addition of soccer into the Red Hook scholastic teams' fold.

Teachers Advocate for Soccer, Then Coach

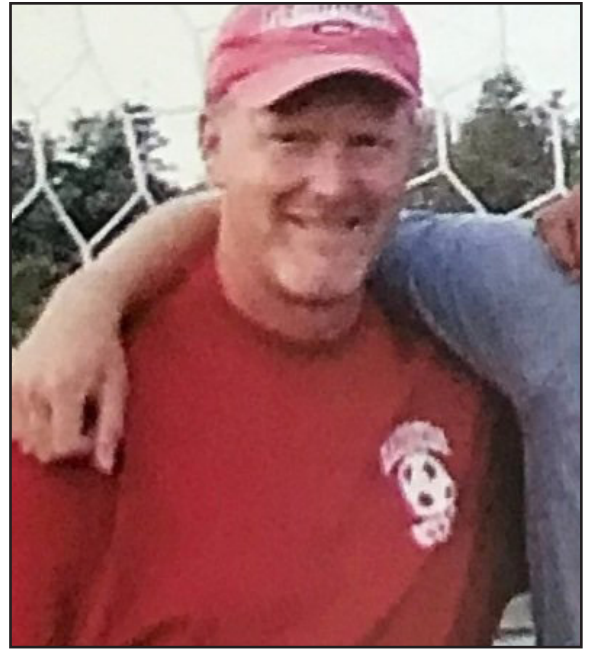
Because players were involved in the soccer club, their strong skills were noticed in the gym classes in Red Hook. Former Athletic Director Seidel, who was also a phys ed teacher and coach in the district, said "when we would play soccer in gym class, I'll talk to some of the kids who were really good and find out they were on club teams." Around that time, teachers like Sutton, Pavlich, and Jeff Kaiser advocated for adding soccer to the Red Hook team options. Sutton had only played three soccer games his senior year as the sport was not introduced until then at his central New York high school, and he coached two years of junior varsity when he first began teaching at another district. Red Hook did not have a soccer program when he arrived, so Sutton coached tennis. "The big shift for me," Sutton says, "was my introduction to Jez Holdsworth, a young English teacher on a Fulbright exchange at New Paltz with my wife Linda, who teaches English there. He re-introduced me to the game, and the rest is history." Sutton has helmed squads from the first modified team in 1997 to junior varsity in 1998 and varsity in 1999, along with coaching the junior varsity girls in the spring of 1998 and varsity of 1999. Pavlich had played soccer for years growing up in New York City. When his family moved to Red Hook his freshman year, he couldn't play scholastically as there was no high school program yet, so Pavlich played on local clubs teams instead, eventually playing on Bard College's soccer team. Scott Swere coached the girls' varsity for two years with Pavlich coaching the junior varsity team, taking over as girls' varsity coach in spring 2002. Kaiser, who had played soccer for four years at Kingston High School, coached soccer at the modified and junior varsity levels for the boys and girls. Other junior varsity coaches and assistants have included high school teachers Bill Decker, Andrew Makebish, Rich Saulino, and Cori Witkiewicz.

The Future Looks Bright

How quickly the soccer programs succeeded surprised Seidel, who had started teaching phys ed in Red Hook in the 1974-75 school year and was the athletic director from 1983-2005. He says he figured

establishing a winning program would take quite a while, but “I was surprised at how fast the program moved forward, taking only four to five years to get to the top. Boy, was I glad to mistaken.” He credits that steep trajectory to the way so many of the players are hard working and go the extra mile, they play multiple sports, and they have supportive families. He adds that the district is very fortunate to have had quality coaches who teach in the district—making strong connections with their students and team members. Seidel really appreciated that during his time as athletic director “in all those years with those two gentlemen coaching [Coach Sutton and Coach Pavlich], I never had a parent call to complain about anything.” Retired and living with his wife in North Carolina near his son and family, Seidel is up on the latest doings of the soccer program. His daughter Kerri, another Red Hook graduate, has a daughter Kellee Knuschke, who currently plays on the varsity girls’ team as a freshman. “The program is so deep in the community, I only see great things for it in its future,” says Seidel.

Jutton, who now coaches varsity golf at Rhinebeck, is focused on the upcoming years of local soccer, too. “Coming full circle,” he says, “my boys (Brock, age five, and Beau, age three) are playing in the Red Hook Soccer League.” Here’s to the next 25 years of soccer in Red Hook.



Coach Steve Sutton