

High School Sports

Atlanta and Georgia high school football scores and sports coverage of metro Atlanta and Georgia schools from the AJC

By Seth Ellerbee

Whitefield Academy riding momentum following last season's title

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Whitefield Academy following its state title victory in Macon in 2017. (Seth Ellerbee photo)

During the past five weeks, boys soccer teams across the state have positioned themselves for postseason runs, and several familiar programs have climbed to the top of the rankings in their respective classifications.

Class A Whitefield Academy is one defending-champion that is riding momentum from its 2-1 victory against Walker in the Class A championship match at Mercer

University last season. The team appears ready to make another solid run through the brackets.

“I cannot believe that we are where we are right now,” said Whitefield coach Steve Hellier after winning the title last season. “This has just been an unbelievable ride, and there are so many things that could have happened to keep us from this. But here we are -- state champions.”

After losing several key contributors, including William Hellier, the coach's son, to graduation last year, Whitefield's core group of seniors have kept the figurative ball rolling. The seven seniors – captain Jakob Burkett, captain Josh Orr, captain Stephen Hellier, Hunter Bilotti, Jared Jones, John Matherne – have played together since fifth grade and bring an unrivaled chemistry to the pitch.

“That's really unique, and they've really bonded and worked together,” said Hellier. “Not to say they don't go after each other at times, brotherly love of sorts. So there is that real uniqueness in them. I think that showed last year and had something to do with some of our success. These guys just know each other so well.”

Other contributors include West Peterson, a junior who scored the game-winning goal in the state championship last year, who's a threat on offense and can score or create assists. Casey Torres, a sophomore transfer, adds hustle and skill to the back line this season. A second-year player, senior Clayton MacLemore, is a centerback alongside Burkett and has played a large role in the defensive sets. Senior striker Rachid Bilotti adds offensive power to the charging WolfPack.

“I think I told you last year, that whole run was very unexpected,” said Hellier. “Every team says, in the back of their minds, that they'd like to win a state championship. We had a decent group of kids, but it was just outside of the real realm of possibility that we would pull that off. Every game that we got closer to it, we just became more and more amazed that we would keep it moving forward.”

If last year's title was unexpected, you'd never know it. The WolfPack, ranked No. 2 in Class A with a 9-1 record overall and a 4-0 region record, are threatening another deep run into the playoffs. Currently, Whitefield is chasing a Paideia program that dealt Whitefield its only loss of the season, a 3-4 defeat Feb. 6.

Since that loss, Whitefield has won eight consecutive games, including an 11-1 thrashing of St. Francis on March 1 and a 7-0 shutout against North Cobb Christian on March 6.

After losing his playmaking son, William, and another great defender, Aaron Harges, Hellier is pleased to see that a championship mentality still exists.

"Now, we are just really trying, at this point in time, to not think of ourselves more than we ought," he said. "We just really want to focus on putting the team over any individual successes and to keep trying to play one game at a time."

Here are the boys soccer rankings for each of the seven classifications:

Class AAAAAAA

1. Walton
2. Central Gwinnett
3. Norcross
4. Parkview
5. Lakeside-DeKalb
6. Lambert
7. Berkmar
8. Brookwood
9. Pebblebrook
10. South Forsyth

Class AAAAAA

1. Cambridge

2. Gainesville
3. Chattahoochee
4. Allatoona
5. Johns Creek
6. Dalton
7. Alpharetta
8. Pope
9. Sprayberry
10. Heritage-Conyers

Class AAAAA

1. Clarkston
2. McIntosh
3. Carrollton
4. Rome
5. Johnson-Gainesville
6. Decatur
7. Clarke Central
8. Grady
9. Cross Keys

10. Veterans

Class AAAA

1. Chestatee

2. Blessed Trinity

3. Marist

4. Columbus

5. Upson-Lee

6. Northwest Whitfield

7. Woodward Academy

8. St. Pius X

9. Jefferson

10. Eastside

Class AAA

1. Westminster

2. East Hall

3. North Murray

4. Savannah Arts

5. Greater Atlanta Christian

6. Windsor Forest

7. Sonoraville

8. Stone Mountain

9. Lovett

10. Calhoun

Class AA

1. Jefferson County

2. Benedictine

3. Putnam County

4. Thomasville

5. Coosa

6. Lamar County

7. Harlem

8. Gordon Central

9. Model

10. Pepperell

Class A

1. Paideia

2. Whitefield Academy

3. Atlanta International

4. Pinecrest Academy

5. Georgia Military
6. Savannah Country Day
7. Athens Academy
8. St. Anne Pacelli
9. Wesleyan
10. Riverside Military