



1982/1983 HOPEWELL VALLEY GIRLS STATE CHAMPIONS

In 1979, the first year of girls soccer at Hopewell Valley posted a 2-10 record. Within three years, the program earned its first state championship and followed it up with another a year later. In honor of their hard work and remarkable achievement, we welcome the 1982/1983 Hopewell Valley Girls State Champions into the Mercer County Soccer Hall of Fame, Class of 2024.

Known for their unorthodox pregame ritual of doing the “Hokey-Pokey”, the 1982 version of the Bulldog girls posted a stellar 15-5-1 overall record, going an undefeated 13-0 against Division B foes. Victorious in the South Jersey Division B Championship, they posted a 2-0 victory over Mahwah in the NJSIAA State Championship for their first state title at a time when New Jersey soccer only had two divisions for all schools. Led by Hall of Fame coach “Gentleman” Jim Loper and assistant coach Tom Ponting, every member of the team, which numbered twenty-two players, contributed in every game, including the final match. For his guidance, Loper was named Mercer County Coach of the Year in 1982.

1983 brought more of the same success that 1982 brought. Continuing with the same core group of players and playing a combined schedule of Division A & B teams, the squad compiled a 12-4-2 record, defeating Burlington City, 4-0, in the sectional final before taking on a tough Chatham Borough team that brought a 17-1 record into the state championship. In a game that saw both teams have multiple scoring opportunities, the final whistle saw the game end in a scoreless tie, earning Hopewell Valley a share of the state championship for a second successive year.

Members of the 1982 title winners included Kari Spaeth, Byrdie Calkin, co-captain Bonnie Suydam, Gwen Flanders, Cherie Waters, Katie Gleeson, Chris Messier, Patty

Rovnyak, Colleen MacCotter, Tina Gallagher, Chris Turner, Kristin Carlson, Stacey Noonan, Karen Wines, co-captain Debbie Smith, Jessica Seesel, Becca Grossman, Chris Turner, JoAnne Astalosh, Sharon Lewis, Joan Ziegler, and mid-season addition Kim Roche.

1983's championship team included Spaeth, Suydam, Seesel, Gallagher, Calkin, Messier, MacCotter, Roche, Rovnyak, Lewis, Ziegler, Gleeson, Debbie Maly, Kelly Gallagher, Colleen Ragola, Nancy Spanza, Marla Golden, Liz Weil, Betsy Kurtain, Terry Tomarchio, and Stacy Palagano.

Making history as the first team, male or female, to win consecutive State Championships, the 1982 / 1983 Hopewell Valley Girls State Champions have earned a special place in Mercer County soccer history and we welcome them into the Mercer County Soccer Hall of Fame, Class of 2024.