

Westwood Soccer - Easing the transition to Senior High School

The transition from Junior to Senior High can be a difficult one for grade 9 students. Walking into Westwood Senior, I believed older kids to be quite intimidating. Their proud stances, boisterous attitudes, and towering height were all valid reasons to be nervous in their presence. These fears were not at all waived when I signed up for the team and was told that several younger girls would be placed on the older Juvenile team, playing with and against 11th graders.

How could they expect grade 9 students to compete with the older girls?

Soccer tryouts were held shortly after I signed up, and thankfully, were not as intimidating as I feared. A few less than 30 girls tried out for the teams and the bulk of the players were in Grade 9 and 10, which provided me with reassurance. The girls trying out in Grade 11 were very few, but nonetheless provided support and encouragement to the younger girls throughout the hour-long session.

All of the girls that tried out made it onto either the Midget or Juvenile team, a substantial amount of the Grade 9 and 10 girls securing spots on the older team. The older girls graciously accepted us onto their team and made sure we felt comfortable playing as a group. Their knowledge and experience shone through their technique and teamwork, providing confidence to the younger players. Before long, we were ready to start our competitive season.

The Juvenile Girl's team defeated Howard S. Billings this Wednesday, 4 to 1, in our second home game this season and traveled to Royal West on Thursday for another 4-1 victory.

Our season is just about half-done and the team is undefeated, we've proven to be a very respectable team, despite the age differences between the players. Playing with older girls has not only improved our individual soccer skills, but has also taught us how attitude on and off the field is what makes a group of girls into a team. The older girls have been extremely reassuring throughout our season, encouraging the younger player that we are capable of the task.

I believe our team may, in fact, be stronger with the mixed grade levels, as the younger girls must push themselves to achieve a higher playing level and the older players to lead by example. To continue our winning streak, we must stick together as a team as we have in our past games, and further learn to adjust to each individual girl's playing style. Joining the older team has turned out to be a great learning experience, and has made the transition to senior high school more comfortable.

I have learned many things from my older teammates, from playing various positions to realizing how your attitude can affect those around you in a positive way.

Hayley Dave is a grade 9 student at Westwood Senior High School in Hudson, QC.