

Soccer camp attempts to develop skills of players

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Today's soccer players who are in middle school (grades 6-8) will be moving up to the high school level before most people may realize.

While players at that age generally have the basic skills of the game down, the middle school years are a time for them to polish and refine their skills before they get to the high school level, where the technical part of the game can play a difference in a team's success.

Edwardsville High School's boys team played host to a camp Monday morning at Tiger Stadium where middle-school aged players took part in drills designed to help develop their skills; Monday's session concentrated on possession, how to keep control of the ball when being challenged by members of the opposing side.

“In this case, everything today, at least, is based on possession,” said **Tiger coach Mark Heiderscheid**, “because at the middle-school level, it's about trying to develop players technically. We've got a good group that's here, mostly seventh-grade and eighth grade with some sixth grade as well, and these kids are going to shape the next generation (of high school soccer players).

“At this point, you have them for a week, and whatever you can do with them for a week, you try to polish them, get to know them lay some foundation; even some of it is just getting to know kids and we're trying to get them as technical as we can so when they get to high school, we can concentrate more on tactical stuff. Quite a few of them have high school potential here and are very talented. They'll be here (at the high school level) before you know it.”

The concept of the middle-school camp is not a recent happening; several players Heiderscheid coached in the camp in the past went on to help Edwardsville win the 2013 IHSA Class 3A state championship. “I can still remember vividly that one group as eighth-graders,” Heiderscheid said, “that ended up being juniors for the year we won it.”

While the camp helps polish the skills players will need when they reach the high school level, perhaps even beyond. “It's sometimes surprising because the game just keeps getting better and better,” Heiderscheid said.

