

Kickers now the target

Everybody wants to knock off the team on top

The DB Law Kickers are about to find out that the old adage about it being lonely at the top doesn't hold water in the North Cariboo Men's Soccer Association. In fact, the top can get downright crowded when you have a number of talented teams trying to claw their way up and kick you off the top.

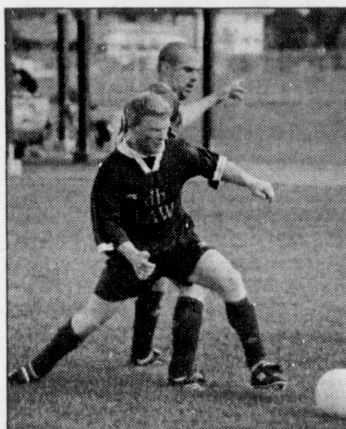
The Kickers are first in the men's soccer second division. But don't let the designation fool you, the second division can be just as competitive as the first division. And there are a lot more teams waiting to tear you down when you're on top.

"Now they know they can play well and they can beat the other teams. The self-confidence is higher than it was a few years ago," says coach Mick Kearns. "We play how we're used to playing and try to stay consistent."

And consistency is paying off. The previous league champs, Coach's Corner, lost their first game in two seasons and after that it was open season, with the Kickers kicking aside the competition to seize top spot. But it's going to be a fight to hold onto it.

"College Heights 2 for 1 is going to be a tough team to play. They started to play well in the last third of last season after being at the bottom. Something seemed to click and they've started to pick up now," says Kearns, pondering the struggle he has keeping the Kickers at the top. "Vanderhoof is always a good team... they play a tough game and if you're going to try and twinkle-toe the ball they'll whack ya."

And of course there's still Coach's, beaten but far from defeated. The Kickers



The Kickers held onto the top spot Sunday, beating Bonnet Hill 1-0.

Doug Brown/Free Press

have suffered league and playoff defeats in the past at the hands of Coach's and they still loom large in the thinking of many of the Kickers, says Kearns.

One of the Kickers' strengths that has allowed them to rise to the top is also one of their weaknesses. The departure of six of their older and more experienced players to the Masters division meant an infusion of young blood to the team, says Kearns. But where youthful energy and speed can be beneficial to a team, youthful impulsiveness and cockiness can be equally detrimental.

"The young guys try to beat one too many guys instead of going for the easy pass," explains Kearns. "It is a little awkward at times with the new guys. We're not sure how they play and they're not sure how we play."

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