

Rome's Hufstetler excels as forward

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When one player goes down in soccer, another player has to step up and fill the role. Each member of the team has to be ready to accept a new role on the team and be ready to play well outside their comfort zone.

Rome's Rebekah Hufstetler had to take on a new role in her senior season with the Lady Wolves, and she wound up having one of the best performances in her entire career.

Hufstetler took on the job as Rome's leading offensive weapon this season and thrived, breaking the school's single-season scoring record and proving too much for opposing defenses to shut her down. Her willingness to step up in a new role and still succeed is part of what makes her the 2017 Rome News-Tribune Girls' Soccer Player of the Year. The senior forward scored 44 goals this season, nearly as many in her first three years combined. It is the second time she has set a school record, as she broke the Rome assists record as a junior with 19.

She will continue her career at Georgia State University in the fall.

Setting up her teammates was always Hufstetler's specialty as she led the team in assists in her first three seasons. But with last season's leading goal-scorer Alli Gaither out with an ACL injury most of this past season, Hufstetler was asked to take the lead and be the attacker for the Lady Wolves. While she posted the large goal numbers, Hufstetler still managed to lead the team in assists with eight. She also served as the team captain, providing senior leadership to the younger players on the squad as they reached the second round of the state playoffs and came in second in Region 7-5A.

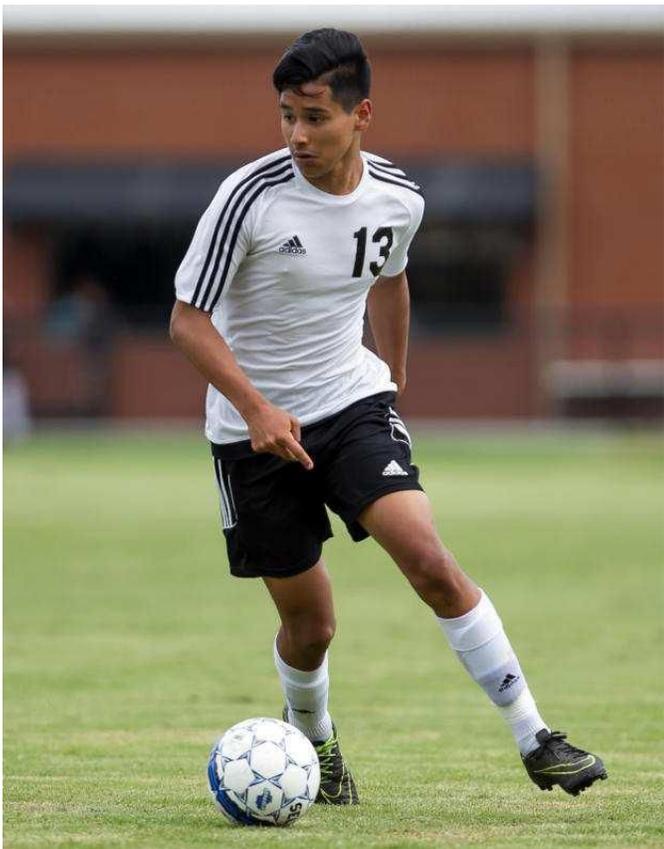
Joining Hufstetler on the RN-T All-Area team from Rome are midfielder Ramsey Cook and keeper Kat Tracy. Cook was another player that had to switch positions this season, while Tracy had three shutouts and 145 saves in her first season playing soccer. It didn't take much to see that there were several top girls' soccer players in the area this season, and Unity Christian had its fair share that has helped them capture the GICAA Division II-A title two years in a row.

The sister duo of Hannah Eddins and Tori Eddins were two key components of Unity's success, as Hannah finished with nine goals and eight assists and Tori had seven goals and three assists, including a penalty kick and goal in the Lady Lions' state championship game. Hannah signed to play for Berry College.

Gabby Ariza and Chanceley Book were Unity's top defensive weapons. Ariza, a senior, was the anchor of a Lady Lions' defense that allowed only five goals all season, including just one in the playoffs. Book, Unity's reliable keeper, had 58 saves and eight shutouts in her junior season. Kyla Reynolds and



Rome News-Tribune
Rome's Rebekah Hufstetler (**LEFT**) and Coosa's Jorge Lopez (**RIGHT**) are the 2017 Rome News-Tribune Soccer Players of the Year.



Jennifer Espinoza were success stories for Model, which won the Region 7-AA title and reached the quarterfinals of the state playoffs. Reynolds scored 34 goals and 10 assists in only 12 games played, while Espinoza led the team with 49 goals.

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For the complete all-area soccer teams see page **B2**.

Embracing new roles

RN-T ALL-AREA SOCCER TEAMS

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