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# Chandler a badminton threat

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Along with the state badminton titles Phoenix Mountain Pointe and Phoenix Greenway won last season, the two schools also shared something else, something not nearly as pleasing to the eye as a championship trophy: the loss of top players.

Mountain Pointe, the Class 5A champion, lost four of its top six players to graduation, including singles winner Alexandra Elston.

Greenway, the 4A titlist, is worse off. The Demons said goodbye to their top six players, leaving coach Heather McDonald with an unsettling feeling that this season might become one to forget rather than one to remember.

"We won't come close to winning state this year," McDonald said. "The teams to beat probably will be (Scottsdale) Chaparral, (Tempe) McClintock and (Phoenix) Sunnyslope."

Trying to pick a 5A favorite is a little like trying to find a shuttlecock in a haystack.

Like Mountain Pointe, who introduced former assistant Pom Brown as its new coach this season, Phoenix Xavier also lost the bulk of its lineup.

But new Xavier coach Peggy Arvallo, who won a state singles title at South Mountain and was *The Republic's* Player of the Year in 2002, does see a ray of hope with senior Vianett Mena, last season's state runner-up in singles.

"She moves really well on the court and has great footwork," said Arvallo, who graduates in December from Arizona State. "But it's still going to be a struggle for us. I think it's going to be a rebuilding year."

While Xavier rebuilds and Mountain Pointe tries to reload, Chandler may be the team that reaches this season's pinnacle.

Chandler reached the semifinals last season, losing 5-0 to Xavier. But the Wolves return five of their top six players, including senior Amy Cappuccio, who was on the winning state doubles team.

Senior Alheli Jacquez and junior Olivia Li, who combined to finish in the top eight in state doubles, also return.

"I feel like we have the talent and the depth to get to the title game," Chandler coach Lois Emshoff said. "If

everybody stays healthy we should be OK, because we're as deep as last year's team."

Chaparral, 4A runner-up last season, and Sunnyslope, a state semifinalist, each return five players and likely enter as the teams with the largest targets on their backs.

"I don't know about that," said Chaparral coach Carrie Davis, whose top singles player last season, senior Leslie Appleton, returns.

"Nobody is going to put down their racquets and let us win. Put it this way: It's not going to be easy."

In senior Megan Hallick, Sunnyslope coach Sarah Schlesinger also welcomed back her top singles player. Seniors Theora Neumueller and DesJean Bauer, state doubles runner-ups last season, also return.

Hallick, Schlesinger said, has the skills to possibly challenge Glendale Independence senior Jessica Ruiz, the reigning 4A state singles champion.

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