

Boys soccer: Midfield is big question



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Not too many questions face the Joel Barlow High boys varsity soccer team as it prepares for the upcoming season.

When it comes to knowing who will play in what capacity, the Falcons seem to have most of the answers already. Only one area appears to be a work in progress.

"The big question is how well the midfield can function," said Paul Winstanley, now in his sixth season as head coach. "We're reconfiguring in the midfield."

The Falcons officially started practicing last weekend and are making progress, as evidenced by their annual game against the alumni (see other story). The real tests will start when they open the season on Sept. 15 at home against Kolbe-Cathedral.

"We'll be strong defensively again, which is our cornerstone," said Winstanley. "We should be at least able to do as well as last year."

That team compiled a 9-3-5 overall record. Along the way the Falcons won their second straight South-West Conference title and third in four seasons.

The season, however, came to an end with an upset loss to Tolland in the state Class M tournament.

Graduation took a number of talented players since, among them former captains Mike Flynn, Cody Hickok, Alex Pelzar and Drew Crannell.

Flynn was an All-SWC selection on defense as was Hickok, a four-year starter in goal. He also played in the field on occasion.

Former captain Pelzar scored a number of goals as a midfielder and was named an All-SWC second team. Also a captain last season, Drew Crannell was part of Barlow's central defense.

Mike Ashton, Martin Jocher (All-SWC honorable mention) and Charles Lillicraf have also graduated.

"All those guys will be missed," said Winstanley. "We lost a lot of midfield-type players."

In other areas the Falcons will have much experience, due to a number of returning players. They will also be a mature group, with 11 seniors.

Leading the way are captains Anthony Caruso, Chris Ferullo, Dan Goldman, Zack Frank, Brian Krakel and Jake Soodek.

"They're all deserving," said Winstanley. "They all have excellent leadership capabilities."

Caruso was backup goalie last season but took over when Hickok was in the field. "He'll be one of the stronger goalkeepers in the conference," said Winstanley. "I feel confident he'll be more than ready."

Ferullo and Frank will be on defense while Goldman (All-SWC honorable mention) and Soodek could see time at forward. Krakel, a real workhorse, according to Winstanley, will be in the midfield.

Several other experienced seniors are also back, including forward Will Kiriazides, midfielder Matt Giamportone and Pat Stimola. Classmate Varyk Kutnick is recovering from a dislocated shoulder and should be back in a few weeks. New to the team is senior Albert Cortina.

A number of juniors will contribute to the team, including Sean Basak-Smith, who was a forward last season. Jake Naber could be a central defender.

Alex Schettino is a forward and Ian Rosamilia could be in the midfield or on defense.

Other returning juniors include Sean Sullivan and Phil King. Connor Regan unfortunately suffered a knee injury during the off season and is perhaps out for the year.

In addition, the Falcons have several players who could back up Caruso in goal. These include junior Sean Hanczor, sophomore Jake Schloss, and freshman Dan Johnson.

As usual, the Falcons expect to go far in the post-season. Reaching the finals of the SWC playoffs and state tournament are high on their list.

"We definitely set that as our goals," said Winstanley. "That's how we look at it. Success is not a choice around here."

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