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## High school soccer preview

MIKE CARDILLO

### Boys soccer 5-minute guide

#### 5 SENIORS TO WATCH

**Fred Osborne, Trumbull** — Defensive rock in front of the goal that all of the Eagles' play is built forward from.

**Scott St. Cyr, Barlow** — All-New England midfielder will be important if Falcons want to make a return to the state finals.

**Nick Signoriello, St. Joseph** — Midfielder provides a strong two-way presence for the Cadets.

**Alphonse Buccitti, ND-West Haven** — After an 11-goal junior season, the forward will need to carry the Green Knights' scoring burden.

**Russell Oost-Livense, Staples** — Is one of a few returning players from last year's FCIAC co-champs and Class LL finalists.

#### 5 UNDERCLASSMEN TO WATCH

**Pablo Correa, Central** — Junior Bullard Havens transfer lit up the CSC to the tune of 27 goals last year. Will that translate into the competitive and cutthroat FCIAC? There's a chance he could team with Haitian newcomer **Ferguson Larose** to form a potent attack.

**Seth Ragaini, Seymour** — All-state returnee had eight goals last year as a sophomore and should link up with classmate **Dave Ponce** (15 g, 9 a) and senior **Scott Buckholz** (10 g, 5 a) for a strong Wildcats' attack.

**Jeremy Neaton, Masuk** — One of a handful of returning players for last year's SWC champs will need to step up if the Panthers aim for a repeat.

**Kevin Gavey, Fairfield Warde** — All-FCIAC selection leads a talented junior class for the Mustangs, which includes **Andrew Kelley** and keeper **Matt Freedman** as Warde aims to regain its status of one of the stronger teams in the league.

**Tim Merwin, Christian Heritage** — Junior defender was part of the Yankee United team that won this summer's U-17 Connecticut Cup. 5

## **GAMES TO WATCH**

**Barlow at Newtown, Sept. 11** — Season starts with a bang in a non-league encounter at Treadwell Park.

**ND-West Haven at West Haven, Sept. 26** — Nothing is certain when these two rivals square off under the lights at Quigley Stadium.

**Barlow at Masuk, Oct. 22** — Last year's SWC championship game rematch should see a strong Barlow team seeking to take out some frustration from last November's loss.

**Xavier at Fairfield Prep, Oct. 23** — Game could decide the SCC Quinnipiac Division.

**St. Joseph at Trumbull, Oct. 26** — Fierce rivalry resumes on Trumbull's senior night under the lights at McDougall.

## **5 TEAMS TO WATCH**

**St. Joseph** — Cadets return the bulk of their squad and could threaten to make the school's first FCIAC playoffs. "This is the most talent I've had in seven years coaching here," coach Bob Studley said.

**Barlow** — A possession-based gameplan carried the Falcons to last year's Class M final. This year Barlow might be deeper across the field and have a strong trio of St. Cyr, forward Dylan Stone and goalkeeper Cody Hickok to build off.

**Seymour** — The Wildcats have amassed plenty of goals and some gaudy win totals the last few seasons in the NVL. They'll again look for a breakthrough in the state tournament.

**Fairfield Prep** — The Jesuits return a good core from last year's team and are always a team to keep an eye on in the SCC.

**Staples** — Nine starters are lost to graduation and 17 players overall, yet no one around these parts ever will write off the Wreckers. "We're not allowed to rebuild, we have to reload," coach Dan Woog said.

## **5 STORYLINES TO WATCH**

**More, better?** — Less than two weeks before the season the FCIAC adopted a rules change increasing the playoff teams from four to six. First and second place in the regular season now nets a first round playoff bye. On the flip side, in order to fit in the extra postseason game the league cut its regular-season schedule to 15 games. Some coaches are gnashing their teeth that if they miss the league playoffs they could wait from Oct. 24 to Nov. 5 for the state playoffs to begin. Bears watching.

**Streaking** — Trumbull hasn't lost in the regular season in over 20 games. Can the Eagles keep that up in the always difficult FCIAC?

**We can rebuild it** — Masuk, the defending SWC champs and perennial league power Newtown both lost the bulk of their starters from last season. Odds are come November both sides have things in order.

**Trending upward?** — The last two seasons under Sebastian Wojdaszka, Bunnell evolved into a team nobody wanted to play. Now under former junior varsity coach Jim Ginand, can the Bulldogs keep up the positive momentum? Senior forward Mike DaSilva had 12 goals to lead the team last year.

**New faces** — Shelton and Norwalk have been strong programs in the last couple years, but each has a new coach. Other regional teams with new bosses include Ansonia, Foran and Weston.

**— MIKE CARDILLO**