SOCCER
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medal-winning women's U.S. Olympic team to the Under-20 women's World Cup squads and the men's European Championships.

Arzabal, who returns for his eighth season as the Seahawks coach, felt that his team could learn valuable lessons simply by watching soccer at its highest level.

Seahawks team captain and midfielder Keara McCullough followed her coach's advice.

"I enjoyed watching a great deal of the Olympic soccer over the summer," McCullough said. "However, I think I can speak for many of the girls on our team: We all would rather play than watch the game on television."

Cabrillo is a young team, though, which may be why Arzabal feels his players could learn from watching the savvy veterans that appeared on their TV screens this summer. The green, mostly home-grown squad features 11 freshmen to go with seven sophomores. The sophomores are coming off a stellar season in which they went 14-1 in Coast Conference play and 15-4 overall. They lost 1-0 in the first round of NorCal playoffs to Foothill.

At the end of the 2011 season, coach Arzabal expected more players from that team to return. Yet injuries and player advancements means Arzabal finds himself again in a rebuilding stage with his team.

"All but three of our team played soccer at our local high schools, along with local club teams like the Santa Cruz Breakers," he said. "For what we lack in experience, we gain in camaraderie, with teammates being familiar with each other's style of play."

The Seahawks have the NorCal playoffs and the state tournament marked on their calendars again this season. That may be premature thinking considering that in their five games so far, they have tallied just one win — over Lassen last week — but the Seahawks haven't been playing pushovers. The fledgling team's mettle was tested right away with a loss to three-time state champion Cypress from Orange County and a long trip to suffer a 5-0 defeat to perennial power and defending state champion Santa Rosa last week.

Cabrillo opened Coast Conference South play Tuesday with a 5-0 loss to West Valley in Saratoga.

Seahawks forward Alina Andracan said she made the decision to play at Cabrillo was an easy one for her, especially since it has nicer weather than her hometown of Jackson Hole, Wyo., "Not having to play in the snow, wind, and freezing temperatures, like we have back home, makes such a difference," she said. "I am loving it."