2013 Cabrillo Men's Soccer Preview

Young Seahawks seek repeat success

By JUAN REYES

The Cabrillo College men's soccer team was one game away from reaching the Final Four last year but was eliminated in a heartbreaking 1-0 loss to No. 1 Taft College in the 2012 NorCal Regional playoffs. The No. 13 Seahawks made some noise last season by eliminating No. 4 Santa Rosa, 1-0, and No. 2 Fresno City, 2-1, in the first two rounds of the playoffs. They even surprised Taft when they went all the way into double overtime for their win over Cabrillo in the final round of the regional playoffs.

But this year will be a bit more challenging for head coach Paulo Carbone, who is in his eighth year at Cabrillo, especially when he only has a handful of players returning from last year's roster:

"We have a two-year program and we have a lot of transition," said Carbone, whose team went 11-8-4 last season, taking third in the Coast Conference's Central Division. "The group I had last year I had formed in two years. Now we are starting from scratch."

The Cabrillo College forward Adrian Vasquez receives a pass in front of the Evergreen goal during their match Friday.

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CABRILLO

Continued from B8

have a bunch of new players and a few returners, but we have to put them together and work hard to make sure we have a successful season as well."

Despite the fact Carbone practically has a brand new group of guys, he thinks his returning starters Alfredo Zavala and David Mondragon will have a big role on the team and feels this year's expectations should be no different from the last.

"Obviously these are the players we went last year deep into playoffs," Carbone said. "So I expect them to step up and show the way to the younger ones in a positive way, lead them in having a good season and help them to step up even in tough moments. I expect leadership from them."

Mondragon recognizes the youth on this Seahawks team and knows they can still play hard consistently even the chemistry is there.

"Well, for a young team we're doing actually pretty good, I'm surprised," he said. "We just got to step up our game, get a little bit more physical, play a few more games and get used to each other to how we play."

The second-year starter from Soquel High finished the 2012 season with two goals and three assists, which was third best on the team, according to California Community College Soccer News.

Mondragon has to play the role as one of the leaders on the team but he finds out it's not as easy as it sounds with an inexperienced group like this one.

"It's pretty tough because it's my last year and I want to do good," said Mondragon. "I got to step them up to the same level as I want to be in because of last year. We had eight starters that were returners so we had a solid group that went into the playoffs, and they knew how to play with each other. Right now, we have three returners that start so it's a whole different game."

One of the new starters to join the team this year is Zackary Freeman and comes all the way from Wood River High in Idaho. His big stature could be a problem for the opposition and Carbone is pleased to have him on the squad.

"He contacted me and came to see me last year," Carbone said. "He came to watch a Cabrillo game and was impressed with the way we were playing so he wanted to come out here to California. He's a strong central defender. We just need to polish him a little bit with his distribution but I think he's going to grow a lot and he's a quick learner, too. He learned a lot about the way we want to play and we're pretty happy to have him here."

As for Freeman, he's pretty excited to be playing at a higher level.

"It's definitely a big change from my high school team," Freeman said. "It's a lot harder and a lot faster pace. It's a couple of steps higher then I thought it would be. It's night and day because here everyone is good with their feet and everybody is extremely fast. It's just a different style of play."

Another standout is midfielder Giovanni Giattino, a former Santa Cruz High player, who transferred from University of Nebraska-Omaha.

As a freshman at Cabrillo, Giattino started 12 of his 13 games, leading the team in scoring with 16 points (four goals and seven assists).