

Boys' soccer team retools lineup after losing standouts from sectional-finalist season

Port Washington boys' soccer coach Mike Bultman doesn't put a lot of stock in preseason forecasts.

After guiding a team that wasn't expected to be a title contender all the way to WIAA Division 2 sectional finals last year, he knows success is dictated by performance and not expectations.

"People didn't think we would be as good last season as we were the year before, and we went just as far," said Bultman, whose team finished 16-7-3 overall.

"The key is to realize that it's not about what we did last year, but how much we can do if we come together this year."

On paper, the Pirates face some major challenges with the loss of standouts such as forward Joel Mentzel and defenders R.J. Lange and Ryan Lauer to graduation. However, the team has plenty of returning talent, led by senior forward Danny Karrels.

Karrels, an All-North Shore Conference first-team selection as a midfielder last season, was one of Port's top offensive weapons with 12 goals and 18 assists. He also received honorable mention in all-state voting.

"The whole ball of wax starts with Danny," Bultman said. "He was huge for us last year even though he was double and triple-teamed. He'll be the player who makes us go again."

Another key player for the Pirates will be goalkeeper Mitch Lemons, a junior who received honorable mention in all-league voting last season.

Lemons had 12 shutouts and "was great for us last season," Bultman said. "He's improved a ton during the off-season, too."

Among his other veteran talent, Bultman is counting on steady play from seniors D.J. Soya (defender), Sam Dean (midfield) and Marcus Lackovic (midfield); juniors David Cornell (forward),

Carlos Helmstedt (defender), Colin Kinzer (midfield) and Alex Bello (forward); and sophomore Jacob Setzke (defender).

Soya played stopper as a junior but will move into Lange's sweeper position this fall, Bultman said.

Although Port has nearly 40 players out for soccer this season, most of them have never played a varsity minute.

Pirates take fast-forward approach

Written by Steve Ostermann

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“We’ll definitely be young,” Bultman said. “We’re small in numbers as far of varsity-ability guys.”

Even so, Bultman expects his team to hold its own against tough opposition, including perennial conference powers such as Whitefish Bay, Cedarburg and Homestead.

“There were a lot of strong teams in our area last year, but most of them lost a lot of good players,” said Bultman, whose squad finished 3-3-1 in North Shore play.

“I think Cedarburg has the most back, so they may be the favorite. We should finish at least where we did last year.”

Port’s memorable 2009 season included three WIAA tournament wins before it lost to Catholic Memorial in a sectional title game for the second straight year.

Although it may be tough for the Pirates to replicate their success, Bultman isn’t conceding anything.

“We’re really talented up the middle of the field,” he said. “That’s where a lot of teams will have trouble matching up with us.”

Port will open the season this weekend at the Early Bird Invitational, an eight-team tournament in Mukwonago.

The Pirates will face Burlington in a quarterfinal game at 6:15 p.m. Friday and continue play at 11:45 a.m. Saturday.

Port begins its conference schedule Aug. 24 by hosting Germantown at 7 p.m. at Flack Field.