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CG-Belgium girls' team shows its upside by rolling past Port in season opener

What the Cedar Grove-Belgium girls' soccer team lacks in numbers, it should be able to make up for in talent and versatility.

Four players who earned All-Central Lakeshore Conference honors last year are back to lead the Rockets this spring, including Halie Schieffer, their top scorer.

The junior forward scored 15 goals on her way to All-CLC second-team recognition and should again be one of the league's best offensive players.

Cedar Grove-Belgium's other veteran leaders include juniors Brooke Koepsell (forward), Caitlin Hausner (defender) and Alyssa Schmitt (goalkeeper), who all received all-conference honorable mention.

"We have players coming back with some experience but they know with that experience come expectations and responsibility," said Rockets coach Elias Garza, whose team was 7-12-1 overall last season, including a 4-10 league mark.

"There is experience in every third of the pitch," added Garza, who noted that 10 of his players had starting roles last year. Schieffer and junior midfielder Briana Weyker will serve as co-captains.

The Rockets lost three players to graduation, including all-conference midfielder Ashley Turnquist and starting defender Steph TeStroete.

Young talent is already picking up the slack, however. Freshman forward Ashli von Heimburg scored two goals for the Rockets in their season opener April 5, when they rolled past Port Washington, 6-0, at home.

The game was scoreless in the first half before the Rockets took off.

Midfielder A.J. Caldwell scored with an assist from von Heimburg four minutes into the second period.

“That seemed to provide a spark and give the team some confidence, which opened up the scoring for us,” Garza said.

After an unassisted goal by Von Heimburg made it 2-0, Koepsell, Schieffer and midfielder Kelsey Doucette added scores.

Von Heimburg capped the scoring with a goal assisted by Ashley DeSmidt.

“Port Washington is a young team, and our applause goes out to them and their coaching staff. They played very hard,” Garza said.

“We have work to do. We can learn from the experiences of this game. Every game is critical, particularly when it comes to conference play. We need to develop rhythm and chemistry and find our form soon in order to compete.”

Garza said his team will have to improve in order to contend for the conference title, which was shared last year by Oostburg and Ozaukee.

“The conference is strong. I fully expect the competition to be fierce each time these players step on the field,” Garza said. “Absolutely no team can be overlooked.”

This week, the Rockets opened CLC play Tuesday against Sheboygan Christian and will host Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah at 6 p.m. Thursday.

Cedar Grove-Belgium will then participate in the Sheboygan South Invitational on Saturday and play a 4:30 p.m. league game at Howards Grove on Monday.

Image Information: CEDAR GROVE-BELGIUM’S A.J. Caldwell tried to beat Port Washington’s Brooke Buser to the ball during a nonconference match April 5. Host Cedar Grove-Belgium

grabbed an early lead and pulled away in the second half on the way to a 6-0 win in its season opener. Photo by Sam Arendt