

HIGH SCHOOL BOYS SOCCER

Belleville West tries to replace losses of top two scorers

BY DAVID WILHELM
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BELLEVILLE
Coach Rob Thornberry is looking for answers on offense as his Belleville West boys soccer team enters another season.

The Maroons were 15-8 overall and 4-2 in the Southwestern Conference last year, placing second behind Collinsville before losing to O'Fallon in the first round of the regional. They also won the Belleville city championship.

West has a different look this year. It graduated 12 seniors, including leading scorers Sean Gouveia (27 goals, 11 assists) and Drake Terveer (17 goals, five assists).

"We've got a good

core," said Thornberry, in his seventh season. "It's going to be exciting to see what these guys can do together, to see who emerges from the crowd. We're going to have to work as a team to finish."

The Maroons' most experienced players are senior midfielders Max Oplt (three goals, five assists) and Ryan Herling (one goal, 11 assists), senior defenders Trevor Pentland, Caleb Little and Austin Firestone, junior midfielder Blake Williams (five goals, three assists) and sophomore midfielder Joey Pearson.

"Joey Pearson has improved immensely. His foot skills have increased," Thornberry said. "I think he's going to provide some firepower, as well as Blake

Williams. Max Oplt is skillful on the ball. He played outside on the wing last year, but I think we're going to look for more from him in the middle. He possesses the ball well. And Ryan Herling is a skillful player.

"Pentland has traditionally been a marking back, but I'd like to see him get into the offense as well. Caleb Little has great size and he's good in the air, so we're going to look for some offense from him as well. Austin Firestone is a real solid defender. He's going to provide a lot of leadership."

Thornberry said senior midfielder Trevor Biver has had an injury-marred career at West, but he's healthy and will be counted on to supply playmak-

ing skills. Freshman Caydn Hillier is a midfielder that Thornberry said has "great vision" of the field.

"He plays quick," he said. "He's playing at a high level. We're excited to see what Hillier will do on the field for us. Hopefully, we can get him accustomed to the varsity physicality."

Seniors Jordan Douglas and Erik Orchard and junior James Wieggers are fighting for the starting goalkeeper job. Douglas and Orchard did not play in a varsity game last season; Wieggers logged one minute of time.

"They each have their attributes," Thornberry said. "Hopefully, in the Metro Cup (Tournament), we'll see what they bring

and go from there."

Other seniors are defender James Stammer, midfielders Armando De La Cruz, Khaled Nassar, Anthony Bocanegra and Karl Mason. Other juniors are defenders Justin Arai-za and Blake Grosse and midfielder Isaac Goodman. Sophomore Dylan Firestone is a defender.

In addition to learning their offensive identity, the Maroons must mesh on the field, Thornberry said.

"It's finding the chemistry," he said. "We've got a lot of new guys in the mix. If we communicate, adjust and work together as a team, that's going to be the key to our success. The parts are going to have to come together."

West opened the season Monday with a 1-0 penalty-kicks loss to Althoff in the week-long Metro Cup Tournament that also includes Mater Dei, Freeburg, Highland, Mascoutah, Valmeyer Metro-East Lutheran, Gibault, O'Fallon, Wesclin, Civic Memorial, Springfield, Marion

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Belleville West boys soccer coach Rob Thornberry on the Maroons' attack

and Mount Vernon.

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VIDEO

See a video of Belleville West's Trevor Pentland and Austin Firestone talking about the season at bnd.com



BILLY HURST AP

St. Louis' Tommy Pham is congratulated by teammates after scoring on a single by Brandon Moss on Tuesday against the New York Mets.

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS NOTEBOOK

Diaz back on field, Adams nears rehab

BY DAVID WILHELM
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ST. LOUIS
With his right thumb still in a brace Tuesday, rookie shortstop sensation Aledmys Diaz grounders for the first time since suffering the injury July 31 in Miami.

While Diaz's return is not imminent, it's a positive sign for the surging St. Louis Cardinals as they march toward another berth in the playoffs.

"I'm just focusing on taking ground balls today, maybe run a little bit, just start doing baseball stuff," Diaz said. "We'll see. The

swelling has gone down and I'm feeling way better right now.

Diaz has no clue when he will be cleared to return. Healing still has to take place and he must be able to grip a bat. The minor-league season is winding down, so there may not be an opportunity for him to take a rehab assignment.

"I go to see the doctor Monday. We'll see," he said.

Diaz is batting .312 with 25 doubles, 14 home runs and 57 RBIs in 96 games. Since his injury, the Cardinals have gone 10-9, with wins in six of their last eight games after a 7-4 loss to the New York Mets on Tuesday.

"I miss it a lot," Diaz said. "I'm watching the games on TV, but this is part of the process. Right now, I'm focused on supporting the team from the bench and I'll be ready when I come back."

Cardinals manager Mike Matheny is eager to get Diaz back into the mix.

"He was just recently given the go to just kind of start moving it," Matheny said. "He's got a way to go and there's going to be progress, but he's moving in the right direction."

Diaz is just one of 11 players on the disabled list. The other are pitchers Lance Lynn, Michael Wacha, Tyler Lyons, Trevor Rosenthal, Seth Maness, Mitch Harris and Jordan

Walden, catcher Brayan Pena, left fielder Matt Holliday and first baseman Matt Adams.

Adams, sidelined since Aug. 10 with inflammation in his right shoulder, said he is getting close to beginning a minor-league rehab.

"It's feeling good," Adams said. "I'll work out with the team today and (Wednesday) I'll be on the field for BP. I'm cleared to do the daily activities. Hopefully, in the next couple of days I'll be able to get out and get some game time."

"It's part of the protocol. What did I miss, two weeks of game time? I'm just trying to get the timing come back to where it

needs to be and be able to help the club when I get activated."

PLAYOFF PUSH

The Cardinals began Tuesday leading the race for the second National League wild-card spot. They were 1 1/2 games ahead of Miami, 3 1/2 ahead of Pittsburgh and 4 1/2 ahead of the Mets. San Francisco led the Cardinals by 1 1/2 games for the first wild card.

Cardinals manager Mike Matheny said there's far too many games remaining to become concerned with the ebb and flow of the standings.

"We've still got too many games to count any team out," Matheny said, keeping a wary eye on the Mets. "(They're) a team that's been right there all along, a team that won the pennant last year, a team that has so much talent regardless of how things are trending."

"Good team. They obviously have some big arms

and a lot of young talent. I know they're trying to get on a good, positive role also. That's kind of where we all are. ... Every team has that capability, especially teams with this much talent. We've got to stay the course."

Infielder Jedd Gyorko said it's important for teams that find themselves in the middle of the wild-card race to maintain energy and drive despite fighting fatigue.

"This time of year, a lot of the teams are similar," Gyorko said. "This is probably the toughest part of the season. Everyone's starting to get a little tired and starting to struggle. You've just got to keep pushing through. I think being right there in the race is going to keep things interesting around here. It's a tough time of the year, but we're starting to play our best ball."

STAYING TRUE

Brandon Moss doesn't try to be someone he isn't. Plain and simple, Moss explained Tuesday that he's looking for a pitch to drive over the wall in every at-bat.

"I'm not looking to give the at-bat away just to put it in play," said Moss, who began Tuesday with a team-high 23 home runs to go with 56 RBIs. "With the shift where it is and the way my swing is grooved, usually when I just swing to put it in play, I hit it right to someone that's over where I normally hit it."

"It definitely benefits me with an approach to hit the ball in the air and drive the ball. I stick to it. It's one of those things where it doesn't always work out, but no approach always works out. You've got to be true to who you are and stick with it."

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COLLEGE MEN'S GOLF

Edwardsville's Hemmings joins SIUE golf program

Belleville News-Democrat

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville men's golf has added Edwardsville native Justin Hemmings to its roster.

Hemmings comes to SIUE after a semester at Northern Illinois. He graduated from Edwardsville High School in December 2015

then played the spring semester with the Huskies. He was the BND high school Golfer of the Year his senior season at Edwardsville.

"I am very excited to add a player of Justin's caliber to our roster," SIUE head coach Derrick Brown said. "He brings some college experience from his time at NIU and I

look forward to watching him grow at SIUE over the coming years."

Hemmings appeared in five of Northern Illinois' six spring tournaments, including the Mid-American Conference championship where he enjoyed his best finish, tying for 23rd place. His lowest round of the season came in the third round at the

MAC championship where he fired a 72.

Prior to his time at NIU, Hemmings captured the IHSA 3A State Championship as a senior at Edwardsville in 2015. He medaled three other times as a senior. Hemmings was part of a Tigers team that captured four conference titles, two regional championships and a super sectional championship in 2015.

SIUE men's golf opens the 2016-17 season Sept. 3 at the UNO Invitational in Nebraska City.

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