

Names and news

Soccer savvy is crucial at CBS

Despite lacking size, the Falcons contend in the Sierra Valley Conference.

By Jason Jones
BEE STAFF WRITER

The words "young" and "seniors" aren't usually paired, but Christian Brothers boys soccer coach Vince Juarez finds himself using both words to describe the Falcons this season.

When he looks at his roster, Juarez sees seniors, but many of them are 16 or 17 years old.

"Most of my seniors are really young seniors," Juarez said. "They're a year younger than normal seniors. They're learning quite a bit. They're really intelligent."

The smarts are needed to make up for a lack of size and physical maturity.

"When you're giving up 15-20 pounds and 4-5 inches, it's pretty tough," Juarez said. "My junior class is pretty young, too. It seems like all them started school when they were 4."

The youth hasn't necessarily been reflected in the Falcons' performance. CBS is 11-4-2 overall and 6-1 in the Sierra Valley Conference, where the Falcons lead Oak Ridge (5-1-1) and Galt (4-2-1).

CBS is trying to get back to the Sac-Joaquin Section Division II championship game, where the Falcons earned titles from 2000 to 2002. The string ended last season, when the Falcons lost to El Camino in the semifinals.

Unlike the championship years, when the likes of Kevin Goldthwaite (All-Metro first team, 2001) Greg Curry (Bee Player of the Year, 2002) or Ryan Magill (All-Metro and SVC Player of the Year, 2003) were clearly the offensive focal points, this season's Falcons are much more balanced.

There is no go-to guy offensively.

Juarez said 12 Falcons have found the back of the net this season - returning all-SVC player Michael Plasencia and Kebba Manjang lead the team with four goals each - and that scoring diversity is what makes the Falcons so dangerous.

"You spread the wealth," Juarez said.

Seniors Plasencia, Manjang, Gary Miguel and Jonathan Curry and junior Stephen Schetter are among the players who can give teams problems.

Juarez said he knows it can't be easy for Jonathan Curry to hear comparisons to his older brother, who was among the area's best in leading the Falcons to a 27-0-1 record in 2002 before earning a scholarship to UC Santa Barbara. Juarez emphasizes that he wants Jonathan Curry to be Jonathan Curry, not Greg Curry.

"It's hard for a little brother to live up to a big brother," Juarez said.

Among the youngest contributors are sophomore Christopher Crosby, already a standout at sweeper, and junior goalkeeper Keenan Flynn.

"Defensive-wise and offensive-wise, they're playing well together," Juarez said.

The Falcons have allowed two or more goals only four times this season, but one of those games happened Oct. 6, when Cordova upset the Falcons 3-2. That stopped a 13-match string of victories or ties and came two days after CBS had beaten Oak Ridge 2-1 behind Plasencia's two goals.

Even though this isn't Juarez's oldest or biggest team, he remains confident the Falcons will find themselves in a familiar position - the playoffs - at the end of the regular season.

Key upcoming matches include Oct. 20 at Galt and the regular-season finale Oct. 27 against visiting Oak Ridge. The SVC's top two teams make the playoffs.

"I'm pretty sure with the way we're playing, and if they keep doing what they're doing, we'll make the playoffs," Juarez said. "We're in the hunt."