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Cabrillo soccer looks for another postseason run

Men's soccer returns just three players in 2013

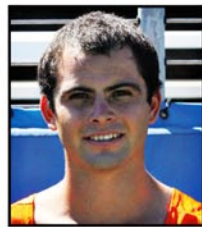
By TONY NUNEZ

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

APTOS — The men's Cabrillo soccer team was just five minutes away from a final four appearance in the state playoffs last season, and this year they'll look bring back some of the magic of



Zavala



Mondragon

last season.

After just making the playoffs as the number 13 seed with a 9-7-4 record, the Seahawks battled their way through Santa Rosa Junior College (1-0) and Fresno City College (2-1) to come against the one seed Taft.

With a spot in the final four on the line, both teams played tight, but Cabrillo lost in the second overtime in

the 105th minute. However, that loss has provided more motivation than depression for the small returning Seahawk class.

"Losing in the last five minutes is ridiculous," said sophomore attack David Mondragon. "I need that final four. I'm going to work hard and make my whole team work hard for it."

Mondragon, 21, is just one of the three returners from last year's team that struggled out of the gates, but just squeaked into the playoffs and shocked everyone. Also on the team from last season is midfielder Alfredo Zavala, 21. Both players have been keyed in as the leaders of the freshman heavy roster.

"We're young," said Zavala, "but

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we have a lot of talent. Right now we're just trying to get to know the guys, so we mess around with them and try and get them to play hard. Once the game start it'll be a different mood though."

Zavala played soccer all four years at Watsonville High School and graduated in 2010. He won a Central Coast Section championship his junior year, but was denied the glory in his senior year in overtime to Alisal High School. So this season has become one of redemption for the former Wildcat.

"That's twice," said Zavala, "so this year has to be the good one."

With the first game of the season coming up on Tuesday at 7 p.m. at Cabrillo College against Canada, the Hawks have little time left for final adjustments.

Still, coach Paolo Carbone, now entering his eighth year, will be making his final tweaks to the final roster, before Tuesday's match. Carbone, who also manages the Santa Cruz Breakers Academy, played soccer professionally overseas in Italy, and has had great and immediate success since taking over Cabrillo.

In his first year as coach

he lead the Hawks to a Coast Conference Championship and the number eight ranking in the nation. Since then the Hawks have won two more Coast Conference Championships ('08, '11) and have been ranked as high as six in the nation ('08).

"He just knows the game really well," said Mondragon. "He knows players weaknesses and he slowly picks at them until they fix it and get better. I thought I was a good player, but then Paolo taught me more stuff, little stuff, and I felt like a better player by just listening to him. He has more wisdom about the game than we do, so if you just listen to him you're going to get better."

Zavala echoed Mondragon. "He knows how hard it is to play against people at a certain level. He might scream at you once or twice, but it's not because he doesn't like it. It's because he's trying to make the team better. He's here to make us better."

There's no denying that replacing four All-conference players in Miguel Acero, David Kamau, Cesar Rocha and Cesar Garcia, but the top-dogs said they know what it's going to take to make it back.

"Last season was tough," said Zavala "but I think we're going to be good this year. We'll be a little less talented, but we'll be the best conditioned team out there."



Tony Nunez/Register-Pajaronian

Cabrillo Seahawks' Cesar Ortiz, right, attacks former Hawks player Gio Robledo, left, as Alfredo Zavala trails behind during Wednesday afternoon practice at Cabrillo College.