

Fairport boys' soccer carries on strong tradition

Red Raiders are amongst Section 5's most talented teams

By Bob Lutson
Home Team Sports

FAIROUT — Gianni Bussani figured his Fairport Red Raiders' soccer team would be looking at an outstanding season this fall.

Bussani figured right. Sparked by some outstanding play from his veterans, the Red Raiders are off to a solid 8-1-2 start, with their lone setback a 2-1 loss at Rush Henrietta back on Sept. 15.

"This year's team is well balanced from front to back," said coach Bussani. "We have many players with varsity experience, who played last year and gained very valuable experience through our run into sectionals. This year's team must learn to set the tempo of the game to our liking and play soccer the way we want to play. Not an easy thing to do, but good teams dictate the flow and pace of the game and that's what we are striving for."

Bussani's Red Raiders are obviously talented enough to make a run at the Class AAA title in a few weeks, but they aren't looking ahead, instead taking it one game at a time.

"We don't talk about titles of any kind," said coach Bussani. "We discuss playing to our potential, doing more than just 'playing your game.' Sometimes its not enough to just play your game, we need give more to the team and do the little things that don't often get noticed by everyone. We have a good nucleus of players and I feel confident about our depth. With a little luck and getting a few bounces here and there, I think we could be in the mix at the end."

So far on the season, Fairport has outscored their opponents 19-7 as junior attackman Brendan Saylor is the team's leading goal scorer with seven goals and one



Defense wins championships. Senior defenseman Justin Matthews, shown here in a game against Penfield, has helped a Red Raiders' defense that has allowed only seven goals all season.

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assist while senior middle Ryan Black is the team's leading point-getter with four goals and a team-best six assists.

"Ryan is tough and very deceptive," said coach Bussani. "He's a tricky player who plays with a great deal of heart and desire."

Senior middle Ryan Smith, a co-captain, has netted three goals with one assist.

"Ryan is a tough, hardworking central midfielder, and he is the heart and soul of our team," said Bussani. "He has an incredible work-ethic and is a leader by example. Ryan is our coach on the field."

Senior middle Dan Garcia has chipped in with two goals and three assists.

"Dan is a very creative and technical player who plays much bigger than his size," said Bussani. "He possesses excellent vision, and is a very effective distributor of the ball."

Another senior, Max Prosser,

are on offense, they also have some outstanding players on defense as well including seniors Justin Matthews, Dan Dragicevich and Dan Kremers, along with juniors Bradley Fitter, Steven Scovner, Craig McGowan and Adam DeJean.

"All seven players have played in the back throughout all of our games this season," said Bussani. "We've had a few lapses, but overall we've limited our opponents chances, and we do a decent job of limiting space for strikers."

Bussani has a pair of solid keepers guarding the posts in senior co-captain Brian Dastin, and junior Kyle Metcalfe.

So far on the season, Dastin has stopped 27 shots while Metcalfe has come up with 34 saves.

Bussani likes using both keepers.

"We have been alternating goalies each game," said Bussani. "The team has confidence in both of our goalies. They both display good leadership in the goal and help to keep our backs organized. They both have made crucial saves to keep us in games when we've had let downs."

"We get an incredible amount of support from the Fairport community. I am always amazed at how many people we get at games and how many parents of graduates still come out to support us."

— Fairport coach Gianni Bussani.

who plays both middle and forward, has added one goal with two assists.

"Max is a very tough, technical player who has an excellent work-ethic," Bussani said.

Bussani also expects senior middle Colin Lucey to return to the line-up after an injury sidelined him for the start of the season.

"Colin broke his ankle four days prior to the season," said Bussani. "Hopefully he will return in the next few weeks so we can have him available as we head into the stretch run of the season and for sectionals."

As talented as the Red Raiders

Fairport tradition

The Red Raiders' soccer program is no stranger to success.

They have captured the Monroe County Division 1 League Title (2000, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2007) and have earned Section V Championships (1996, 1997, 1998) under Bussani's watch.

They were also NYSPHSAA Regional champs in 1996, 1997 and 1998 and were Section V Co-Champions last year with Spencerport, where the Red Raiders advanced on penalty shots before dropping their state qualifier to perennial power Webster Thomas 3-2 in penalty



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Full contact. Although they outshot host Penfield 18-8, the visiting Fairport boys had to settle for the 1-1 tie Sept. 17.

shots.

Fairport has played in the Section V finals the last four years, and they have made it to the Section V title game eight times in the past 12 years, winning crowns in 1996, 1997, 1998 and 2007.

Most importantly, says Bussani, his teams have achieved the New York State Scholar Team Award (combined average of 90% or better) the past five years.

Community support

The success of the Fairport soccer program has been enjoyed throughout the community.

"We get an incredible amount of support from the Fairport community," said Bussani. "I am always amazed at how many people we get at games and how

many parents of graduates still come out to support us. That's the wonderful part of our community and the men's soccer program — we're a family and even when we graduate players, they and their parents are still part of our family."

Fairport also gets plenty of support from the Red Raiders' student body, and also other coaches in the district.

"So many students will come out, members of the other sports teams wish us luck and try to make it to our games," said Bussani. "Coaches in Fairport are all supportive of each other and we always pull for each other's teams. We consistently have graduates come back, their parents come to our games, we've even had parents of graduate come back to be photographers for our varsity. People with no ties to our team who just enjoy

soccer in this community will come to our games to support us. We use Fairport Soccer Club youth players as ball boys and their parents will come to support us. Every home game you will also find teachers and administrators supporting our team; our Athletic Director, Jim Zumbo and our Superintendent, Dr. Hunter also."

Bussani enjoys what the Fairport Soccer Club offers his kids as a stepping stone to his program.

"They are essentially our feeder program and the volunteers who run the organization and the people who coach our youth teams have done an excellent job of teaching kids the game and preparing them for the next level as they get older," Bussani said. "I am proud to say that I live, work, and coach in Fairport."