

Cal State Fullerton Men's Soccer

2008 Season Preview

As part of Cal State Fullerton's preparations for the 2008 men's soccer season, the Titans scheduled a 5-day "mini-camp" at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista. The goal: to get to know each other.

"We have so many new guys and this is the shortest pre-season practice session I can remember," explained third-year Head Coach Bob Ammann. "I think we'll start doing it on a yearly basis, too. It gets everyone away from the routine on campus."

Ammann has assembled a pre-season roster of 36 players, mostly in response to last year's shortage of bodies that prevented the team from practicing 11-on-11 and left his bench woefully shorthanded.

"There's good news and bad news in having so many new players – 24 at last count. We will give a lot of people a lot of playing time early in the season and, hopefully, their play will determine who the regulars are going to be."

Fullerton's Aug. 1 roster included 10 returning lettermen, 2 redshirts, 3 4-year transfers, 1 community college transfer, 14 traditional freshmen, 1 freshman from Germany, 1 NAIA transfer from Germany via Missouri and 2 redshirt freshmen who did not practice with the team last year. It does not include the talented Farfan twins – Michael and Gabriel – who departed after their sophomore seasons to pursue professional opportunities.

"I think our team was better than our record showed last year," said Ammann of a 7-10-3 campaign that included some heart-breaking losses and ties. An inability to score proved to be the major shortcoming as the Titans were shut out six times and totaled only 23 goals in 20 matches.

"We went out to get people who we think will put the ball in the back of the net. Deniz Sevinc from Germany will be a huge addition. He's a prototypical college forward – fast, strong and powerful. He will cause defenses fits, yet he is very team oriented. He will be a freshman but we expect he will be a team leader.

"We hope to have Celso Alvarez (Soph., Rio Hondo JC) ready to go. He should see significant playing time and will have three years to play for us. Jamall Farquharson (Jr., Cal State Bakersfield) is very fast on the flank and I think he fits into our style of play better than he did at Bakersfield.

"Of the other freshmen, I think Nick Posthuma (Pasadena, St. Francis HS) will see considerable playing time. He's good in the air and a fighter – a real physical kid. And Jesse Horta (Atwater HS) was a major goal scorer in his youth career. He's not as physical but more technical.

"And Joshua Meyer (redshirt, Cerritos College) is eligible for this season and he is a real threat."

The Titans do return their leading scorer from 2007 in Shay Spitz, who moved from defense to forward at mid-season and finished with 5 goals and an assist. At 5-foot-7, 145 pounds, he was a surprise factor a year ago. The only other returning players with a Titan goal to their credit are senior midfielder Jacob Shumway, who scored twice, and junior defender Matt Sanders, who had one goal.

Defense was Fullerton's strength in 2007 as the Titans allowed more than one goal in only seven matches. Kevin Puder was 0-1-1 in the net as a junior behind graduated Brent Douglas and is the most experienced of five goalkeeper candidates.

"He's a senior but he will be challenged," said Ammann, who had to use three goalkeepers in the first six matches of last season due to injuries.

Sophomore Tyler Andrews played more minutes (409 to 289) last season than Puder while going 1-3-1. Three freshmen also will be in the picture – Trevor Whiddon from Rancho Buena Vista High School in San Diego, Pablo Gonzalez from Arlington High School in Riverside and Chris Quaresma from Marina High in Huntington Beach.

Joining Sanders, an honorable mention All-Big West Conference selection, on the back line will be lettermen T. J. Detviler and possibly Tony Terrazas along with some combination of redshirt Amando Padilla (West Covina HS), transfers Justin Burney from Colgate and Mark Nelson from Humboldt State and freshmen Omar Tena (Be Air HS, El Paso, TX), Jonathan Birt (Calvary Chapel HS, Santa Ana) and John Meza (Arlington HS, Riverside).

"We hope Terrazas is healthy. He had hernia surgery over the summer," added Ammann.

The midfield is probably the most wide open area of the lineup. Ryan Kaylor and Andres Jarquin each has a season under his belt – Kaylor after transferring from Mt. Sac and Jarquin coming in from Guatemala.

"We're optimistic that Andres will be ready to go now that he knows what to expect. It was a major adjustment for him coming in from Guatemala and learning the pace and physicality of the college game."

A freshman to watch in the midfield is one who doesn't act like a freshman – Michael Denny from Rancho Bernardo High School in San Diego.

"He is tough and has great feet," said Ammann of one of his top recruits. "He's a threat to score but also is a good distributor. At 190 pounds, he won't lose too many physical battles. He is excellent on free kicks and I foresee him developing into a team captain type. And I think Eric Escobedo (Bell Gardens HS) will do well. He's very technical and was on the Chivas Academy team."

With a new abbreviated scheduling format in the Big West this season, Ammann sees great things ahead for the conference with recent powerhouse UC Santa Barbara having its hands and feet full with several serious challengers.

"Our goal is to finish in the top four, and hopefully No. 1 or No. 2 so we can host one of the semifinal games in the new post-season tournament," said Ammann. "The Big West is one of the top four conferences in the country but last year we didn't have the fourth-most teams in the NCAA Tournament. Now that we don't play every other team in our league twice, we will have a much better chance and will be better able to protect ourselves from each other."

Every coach bemoans the strength of his schedule but Ammann has legitimate reasons to be fearful.

“About one third of our schedule (6 matches) is against teams (5) that were in the NCAA Tourney last year,” he points out before itemizing the obstacles. “We open against Alabama A&M at Northridge and they will be very fast. Then we face Georgetown which I think returns every starter. UNLV is similar to us, in the third year of a rebuilding phase. And Cal State Bakersfield is now a bonafide Div. I team.

“Then we go to Air Force and Denver, where you have the altitude and difficult conditions to deal with.

In Seattle we always have a difficult time and we face two NCAA teams in Washington and Portland. They play each other the week before so maybe they will beat each other up. Washington always has been a difficult team for the Titans.

“Then we go to Bradley for one match. They expect a crowd of 4,000 or 5,000 – they don’t have football or women’s soccer and they are coming off an NCAA tournament season. It will be a great environment.”

That takes care of September and leaves the Big West schedule plus a non-conference game against Houston Baptist, a team transitioning to Div. I.

“With the tournament now, there won’t be any meaningless games.”