

Veteran Bellaire soccer team has first scrimmage Saturday

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It wasn't exactly the type of December that Bellaire head soccer coach Ray Kanzig had hoped for.

The Cardinals didn't play any games — those start next week — and they didn't get many practices in either during the time allotted for their preseason workouts.

"Our field is landlocked, so if

it rains for two days then it takes it two full days to dry out," Kanzig said.

His team is currently back to work preparing for Saturday afternoon's noon season opening scrimmage at Humble.

"We probably only got in two or three full practices (before the break). But I still feel like the few full practices we had were very productive," Kanzig said.

One of the reasons he believes the group made a lot of headway

despite not having as many workouts as he had hoped is the experience the Cardinals have. A total of 12 players are back who played more than 100 minutes and all of them started at least five games.

"Luckily for us, we have quite a number of players back and not just players, but we have a number of players back who played a lot of minutes," said Kanzig. "This junior class has played together since they were freshmen. So I really thought there already was a nice familiarity amongst the players."

He also said the final workout before school was out were three-hours long instead of two to make up for some lost time due to all the rain and cold.

The Cardinals are hoping to make a run this year at the district championship after they finished fourth last year in the tough District 20-5A with a 7-5-2 record.

They had a 13-7-2 mark overall and have already gotten some preseason notice, taking a seventh-place ranking in Region III from the Texas Soccer Coaches Association at their preseason meetings a couple of weeks ago in San Antonio.

"With this group, the first goal was to make the playoffs and we did that last year," said Kanzig. "This year, I feel like we can be one of the contenders.

Again, it's a very strong district, then the way we played against Kingwood, which is always one of the best teams in the state.

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but if we can play with the emotion we had last year in (the 3-2 first-round playoff loss) to Kingwood, then I really believe we can contend for the district title. I think we have the talent. We just have to play with emotion and intensity every game."

Defender Brian Gustafson, forward Jorge Contreras, striker Angel Moreno, striker Mario Diaz, defender Scott Delhommer, left midfielder Luis Contreras, midfielder Jake Lane, midfielder Angel Moreno and midfielder Imhotep Edwards are the top players back for the Cardinals.

Diaz (six goals, two assists), Luis Contreras (six goals, four assists), Edwards (five goals, three assists), and Lane (10 assists) are the top returning offensive weapons.

Moreno will apparently also be playing some goalie this year. He and Gavin Rodriguez are both in contention to be the starter at that position.

"I think that's a nice mix there," said Kanzig. "We've got some starters back. We've got some key reserves coming back. We've got a couple of people back that we moved up from jayvee for the end of our season and the playoff game that are back. So, I think, it's a nice mix, and I think we have guys who know what it takes to make it to the playoffs and that's different for us than last year when we had a lot of talented guys, but they were guys who really didn't know."

He said he'll find out a lot more about his team over the next week when it travels to Humble, then hosts Sharpstown at 2 p.m. Monday in the final preseason scrimmage. But more than that, he said he and his troops are ready to get it kicked off.

"This is always an exciting time of the year, and I'm very excited about this year," said Kanzig. "I think we took a big step forward last year at the end of the year with the way we played down the stretch, and that again this year."

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