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year's kids, and I've got a really big group of ninth graders coming in. At least nine, maybe more. I'm excited!"

After practices kicked off in June, the Viks were able to start playing some friendly summer games.

"So far, we've had four friendly games, two each with Newport and Junction City," said the coach. "Newport was first, and we lost both games to Newport, which is not super surprising as they're a good team."

Next, the Siuslaw team took on the Tigers.

"We played Junction City on July 17 in Florence, and then July 22 in Junction City," Tomaro said. "We split with Junction City — first they beat us 5-2, and then we beat them 5-2, which is kind of what happened in the regular season last year, too; they beat us one game and then we beat them one game."

According to Tomaro, winning these summer games is not the main reason for playing them.

"For me, the point of the summer games is not to win," Tomaro said. "The point is to get the kids playing together, because every year we have a new group. I have a lot of returners, but I have a lot of new kids, too, and you always graduate people."

The summer is about "figuring out where people are going to play and how they play together, and what our team dynamic is going to be and getting the flow on the field," Tomaro said. "Those are all the really important things."

The coach sees the summer games as invaluable practice for her players old and new, as it gives all of them the opportunity to have playing time on the field in a game setting before actual league play.

"They're coming out and doing optional summer practices, so every kid is going to play every game," she said. "That's the whole point, especially with the incoming ninth grade kids, is to get them experience at the high school level. Then, when we win, that's like an extra bonus."

For Tomaro, "It's just getting the kids on the field, getting them used to the flow of the game at this level, and then seeing

how they come together as a team."

So far, she is very pleased with her team's efforts.

"I've been really happy with it," she said. "I think it's been really good. I've seen some great play on the field with my kids who are returning and my new kids, and they're blending together really well, so, to me, the summer's been a big success."

As far as summer goes, the team is off this week, but hoping to schedule some more games in August before the 2021-22 school year begins.

"We're hoping to schedule two more games after moratorium week," said Tomaro. "The first couple of weeks of August, before our season officially starts, we're hoping to get a couple of games in with Waldport also. They're a 3A school, but they started their team the same year we did. [Before] COVID, we played their youth teams in the club, U12 and U14-age, because they're part of the Newport club. They come down and we go up and play games."

Playing Waldport is a chance to play against a team in a similar level of development on the Oregon coast.

"It's kind of fun for the kids to be able to have that little bit of friendly rivalry — they're a really nice team to play," Tomaro said. "That's kind of a little tradition for us."

As summer winds down and the Vikings prepare for the fall season, the second with a varsity team, Tomaro has the added benefit of plenty of players to fill out her teams this year.

"We'll have two full teams," she said. "I'm really excited about it! We'll have close to 30 kids, which is definitely enough for two teams. They might even practice separately this year."

Last year, because numbers were low, the Viks had to finish their already strange pandemic season with no JV team.

"In the past, even last year, we tried to have the JV team until we didn't have quite enough kids, and they were practicing all in one big group," said the coach. "But I think this year, it's enough that we can have the teams practice separately."

Tomaro thinks it will be



important for the athletes to practice with the kids they're going to be playing with on the field.

"They just build that chemistry and those relationships, learn where their teammates are going to be and what kind of runs they make, what kind of passes, how to talk to each other," Tomaro said. "That's just so important. And that's where you get it — at practice."

The team will still do some things in a big group — "because we are just one team," she added.

With plenty of players, Tomaro will be able to rotate kids and ensure that both teams have sufficient coverage.

"There will be probably a few kids who will play on both teams," Tomaro said. "They'll swing back and forth."

These students are mostly underclassmen and will move between varsity and JV.

"At least one or two ninth graders are probably going to play full varsity also, which is so exciting," Tomaro said.

This year, Tomaro will again be welcoming all students on her teams, as there aren't enough girls playing for them to have their own team. What is promising is that there are more girls coming out to play this year than last year. At least one girl from every grade has been in contact with Tomaro so far.

"We're building a good cohort of girls," the coach said.

Before the summer ends, Tomaro is also running a fundraising youth soccer camp from Aug. 2



PHOTOS BY CAMERON JAGOE/SIUSLAW PHOTOS

Top Left: Ethan Jagoe.

Top Right: Nicholas May.

Left: Incoming freshman Nickolas May plays forward for the Viks.



through 6 in the mornings for incoming grades two through eight.

"It's been very popular," said Tomaro, "and we have a good response. Lots of kids coming out! It's our first year doing this camp, and we're really busy getting our plans together so that we keep them busy and keep them learning."

Four coaches help with the camp, along with a handful of high school helpers.

With as much work as they're putting in during the offseason, this fall season will be one to watch for Viking soccer.

"I just love what I've been seeing in the summer," Tomaro said.

Siuslaw's first soccer game of the school year will be a non-league game at Newport/Eddyville Charter on Thursday, Aug. 26, at 6 p.m.

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