

By Kikue Higuchi

Amid a sea of sweatshirts and sweatpants, Ruby Rogers braved a breezy afternoon practice with a t-shirt, shorts and a smile. After nearly two years, Rogers, a senior midfielder at Evanston Township High School, finally returned to her home field.

“It was so much more excitement than I’ve ever experienced playing a high school game,” Rogers said. “Every goal mattered more, every touch mattered more just to make the most of this season.”

The Wildkits dismantled Lakes Community High School 8-2 in their home opener at Lazier Field on April 15, their first game since May 21, 2019. Girls’ soccer coach Stacy Salgado was just as excited as her players to get back on the pitch, but she said she is already thinking about their next game against Loyola Academy on Saturday. Her goal right now is to get her players to work together.

“We try to set up activities and drills so they get to know each other better, because then they’ll want to play for each other,” Salgado said. “The better they know each other, the harder they’ll work for each other. That’s our goal as coaches, to try to facilitate that.”

With an experienced roster of mostly upperclassmen, Salgado, 36, said building team chemistry will be easier this season. Rogers, one of three captains, is on Salgado’s wavelength.

Salgado started practice with two passing drills, emphasizing teamwork and communication. Wherever the action was, Rogers was not far behind, yelling out for her teammates and talking non-stop off the ball.

Rogers says her goal is to help this team find its own rhythm and harmony, in addition to winning games and chasing a state championship.

“To lose a season last year hit all of us really hard,” she said. “We’re just trying to cherish the time we have together; enjoy each other and enjoy the game.”

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