

SIUE Soccer Senior Jorge Gonzalez Picked by Los Angeles FC As 24th Pick in Draft

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EDWARDSVILLE – SIUE senior Jorge Gonzalez was selected Monday by Los Angeles FC with the 24th pick in the third round (76th overall) of the 2020 Major League Soccer SuperDraft.

Gonzalez becomes the eighth SIUE player selected in the MLS SuperDraft and the first since Austin Ledbetter in 2016.

"This means a lot to me as it is all I have ever worked for since I started playing soccer," Gonzalez said. "My dad used to tell me that getting to play professional soccer was

going to be really difficult, but if I worked hard and had faith I would accomplish whatever I wanted. I am blessed and thankful for this opportunity and want to thank my parents for all their support, my teammates, Mario Sánchez for recruiting me and trusting me and everyone in the SIUE Athletics department."

Finishing his career at No. 25 all-time in scoring at SIUE, Gonzalez scored 22 goals and added seven assists for 51 career points. His 22 goals rank 22nd all-time for the Cougars.

"I am thrilled for Jorge, especially to get himself into such a top environment with some high-level coaches," SIUE Head Coach Cale Wassermann said. "Bob Bradley is one of the most prominent American coaches in the history of the game to be with someone like Mike Sorber as well with such great experience."

"I didn't expect to be selected by one of the best teams in the MLS as I didn't know about their interest prior to the draft," Gonzalez added. "This was my dream team as it's located in one of the best cities in the U.S. and also has the best players in the league. When my name showed up on TV my whole family started screaming and hugging me as they were super happy and excited."

Following the 2019 season, Gonzalez was chosen as a first team All-North Region by United Soccer Coaches after earning Mid-American Conference Player of the Year honors. He led the MAC in scoring with nine goals and 22 points. He ranked 49th in the NCAA in goals per game, 55th in total goals scored and 66th in the NCAA with 22 total points.

"He's extremely lethal in front of goal," Wassermann said. "Any time you have a player that has the potential to create goals or assists obviously you add value to a team no matter what position he plays. He is extremely athletic. He is arguably one of the most athletic players in Division I college soccer. When you pair the athleticism with his technical ability and his danger around the goal brings a lot of high-end things that teams look for. Those are some of the reasons he was successful in college, but they are the same things that will translate to a pro environment at an early stage."

Besides Polster and Bilyeu, Christian Volesky also was taken on the first day (32nd overall pick in 2015). Goalkeeper John Berner was selected in the second round by Colorado in 2014. Mike Banner was selected in the third round by Chicago in 2007. Mike Jones was drafted by Sporting Kansas City in the 2011 MLS Supplemental Draft.

In total, more than 75 former SIUE players have gone on to play at the professional level.

"He's earned the opportunity to showcase himself with some of the best players in the country in the Nation's top league," Wassermann said. "I hope for a good start to his chase for that professional contract."