

Former Marquette, CM Standout Soccer Players Making A Difference At Collegiate Level - No. 18 L&C Edges SWIC 2-1

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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BELLEVILLE - Wednesday afternoon was a reunion of sorts as the Southwestern Illinois College men's soccer team hosted the Lewis and Clark Trailblazers.

Looking around the field, there were tons of players from local Riverbend area high schools thanks to some clever recruiting from former Alton Redbird and SWIC head coach Lindsay Kennedy-Eversmeyer.

Earlier this year, three Marquette Explorers and two Civic Memorial Eagles signed on to play for the Blue Storm.

2023 Marquette graduates Myles Panigua, Charlie Fahnestock, and Brody Hendricks join longtime friends and club soccer teammates Brayden Zyung and Joe Aiello from CM.

"I mean, it's awesome, the guys are awesome," Aiello said after Wednesday's match.



"Obviously, we have a variety of players from all sorts of different countries and it's been awesome to learn about different cultures, meet new guys, and also play with the same guys I've been playing with. It's been really great," Aiello said.

On the other side of the field, another recent Marquette grad, Dre Davis was suited up for the Trailblazers.

Davis didn't start the game, but when he did enter the match he received big smiles from Aiello and Zyung who were tasked with defending him.



"I love Dre, he's fun," Zyung said about his good friend. "He'll get in your head, so you can't listen to what he says, but he's awesome, he's a great player and L&C is a great team."

L&C came into this game ranked at No. 18 in NJCAA Division I, and it showed Wednesday afternoon in their close 2-1 win.

While it was an even affair throughout, it was mostly Lewis and Clark dictating play in the first half.

Josh Macklin opened the game's scoring in the 15th minute when he put a shot low into the bottom right corner from right outside the 18-yard box.

SWIC stayed in it early on thanks to some great saves from keeper Jordan Shaw. The Blue Storm used some of his saves as a little bit of momentum as the first half stretched on.

It led to some free-kick opportunities the other way for SWIC, one of them they would capitalize on.

In the 42nd minute, a dangerous free kick was drifted into the box and met in the air by Zyung. He flicked it past Lewis and Clark's keeper Patrick O'Day to tie the game at 1-1 right before halftime. It was his second goal of the season.



"It's awesome," Zyung said about the goal. "Obviously, I have all the support from my teammates behind me. It doesn't matter if I'm the one that scores, I just know that whenever we score, it doesn't matter who gets the goal because we're all family, all the time."

"We're all family here," Paniagua agreed. "Seeing him put the ball in the back of the net is just as important as anybody else. We win as a team and we lose as a team. Today, we lost as a team, but it was a good-fought battle."

SWIC continued to have chances in the second half, but it was Raul Cedilla who cashed in the game-winner in the 72nd minute when he made no mistake at the back post.

The result brings L&C to 6-1-2 on the season while SWIC falls to 3-5-1.

"It was a great game, 2-1, it was a tight score," Aiello said. "I wish we would've come out with the win, but is a good team. I thought we played well."

Hendricks and Paniagua came off the bench for SWIC, as did Davis for Lewis and Clark. Fahnestock did not enter Wednesday's contest but usually sees some time in midfield.

Zyung and Aiello immediately stepped into this SWIC team and became 90-minute defenders to their surprise.

"I didn't know what to expect, to be honest, because there are great players all over the field," Aiello said. "Really, I was accepting of whether I played, or not played. I was going to be supportive no matter what, so I'm just grateful for all the playing time."

"No, I did not," Zyung said whether he expected to become a full-time defender.

"But, at the same time, I just want to be on the field," he said. "It doesn't matter where she (Kennedy-Eversmeyer) puts me. Obviously, I played center mid in high school, but I've played defense before for my club teams and she needed me at right back."

At CM, Zyung was more of a box-to-box midfielder and racked up the points with 10 goals and an astonishing 33 assists. Most of those assists were to Bryce Davis who scored 61 times his senior year before deciding to play on at McKendree University.

Zyung mentioned that he, Aiello, Paniagua, and Fahnestock all live in the same apartment together.

"It's amazing, the chemistry is unreal," Paniagua said. "We tear it up on and off the field at practice and I get to spend time with them at home too. The bond is unbreakable."



Paniagua was one of STL's leading scorers during his senior season for Marquette. He netted 35 goals and had 10 assists, but is still searching for his first collegiate goal.

"College soccer is college soccer no matter what level it is; it's always intense," he said.

He also played baseball for the Explorers and thought about doing both at SWIC but decided to focus on soccer and his business degree.

Aiello, who's studying education and plans on becoming a high school teacher, was always a defender at CM and was a perfect fit into the SWIC lineup.

"It's everything and more," he said about the college soccer experience. "I always knew I wanted to play college soccer, but the environment, the team, I love it. I'm so happy that I picked SWIC."