Del Norte Triplicate

SPORTS

Several Del Norte players receive all-league recognition in soccer

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After winning a first league championship in 28 years in boys soccer this fall, 10 Del Norte players have received all-league recognition, including Isidro Montanez who was named the league MVP Goalkeeper.

Montanez was one of five Warriors named to the all-league first team, with five other players getting an honorable mention.

Six Del Norte girls also received all-league recognition, including Alexis Aguirre and Aurora Mitchell, who were each named to the all-league first team.

Montanez was outstanding between the posts for a Del Norte team that did not give up a goal for more than 520 minutes on the way to securing a first league championship since 1995.

He also was one of the comeback players of the year.

The senior net minder, who started for the Warriors as a freshman and sophomore, returned with a bang this fall after missing his junior year through injury.

But his talent between the posts was only part of what Montanez brought to this year's team.

"In addition to being a great shot stopper who commands his area effectively, Isidro is also a candidly-outspoken team leader," Del Norte head coach David Sanyaolu said. "His performance as part of our defensive unit this season played a large part in our achievement."

Joining the senior goalkeeper on this year's all-league team are teammates Alexis Ortiz, Greyson Franklin, Jacob Ramsey and Deken Hanks.

Ramsey is a junior defender who will be graduating in 2024 and a player who closed out his high school career with a bang, while also showing plenty of improvement this year.

"He is one of the most improved players I have worked with," Sanyaolu said. "A contributory factor being his willingness to learn and improve. As a full back, he was quick to forage into midfield either to launch an attack or stop the opposition's plays before the ball got to our defensive zone."

Franklin also enjoyed a standout junior season.

"Greyson's affable and jovial personality belies the serious and risk-averse approach he takes to defending," Sanyaolu said. "He always made sure the ball did not spend too much time in our defensive zone. He is very good at reading the game and was quick to cover for his defensive partners when they forage forward."

Hanks and Ortiz earned the all-league honors in just their sophomore seasons.

"As a sophomore, Deken made great improvement from where he was last season," the coach said. "He has leveraged his strength — his great speed — to good effect as an attacking player, making timely runs towards goal and combining well with midfielders."

Hanks finished with a team-high 15 goals, including some in crucial matchups.

Ortiz also impressed this fall.

"Another sophomore whose play helped us to achieve great defensive solidity leading to our long stretch of games without conceding a goal," the coach said of Ortiz, who partnered Franklin at center back. "He is very sleek on the ball, good at making ball-winning tackles, and has a good passing range.

"His central defensive partnership with Greyson Franklin is one of the best I have seen."

Five other Del Norte boys — Brandt Pennigton, Lyon Rigden, Saxon Taylor, David Aguilar and Pedro Garcia — each received an all-league honorable mention.

The Del Norte boys finished the season with a record of 11-5-1 (9-2-1 in league).

Aguirre and Mitchell, meanwhile, also enjoyed standout seasons with the Del Norte girls team, while playing key leadership roles.

“Both of them were first-time captains and did a great job at keeping the team upbeat and motivated throughout the season,” head coach Cyndi Hansen said.

Aguirre was the team’s leading scorer, while Mitchell helped anchor the defense.

“Aurora was a key player in our defensive line,” the head coach added. “She has this amazing ability of running quickly on a breakaway attack to stop opposing teams from scoring.

“She is very vocal on the field, telling her team when to push up, get back or overall encouragement to keep going.”

Aguirre was the team’s leading scorer in each of the past two seasons and Hansen believes she could be the program’s all-time leading scorer.

“She plays striker but she is also a great midfielder,” the coach said. “She has an unlimited amount of endurance and can run the entire 80-plus minutes if need be.

“She is an all-round good player and very dependable in any position on the field.”

Teammates Lily Sherman, Avery Ritter, Lily Schaad and Channey Schaad each also received an all-league honorable mention.

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