

STATE COLLEGES

Both Miami-Dade College soccer teams make history with season-opening wins

By Walter Villa Miami Herald Writer

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Photo caption: Miami Immaculata La Salle High School alum Ashley Fonseca (right) is one of the standouts on the inaugural Miami-Dade College women's soccer team, which plays its first game this Thursday. Courtesy of Miami-Dade College

It's hard to decipher which Miami Dade College soccer team was more impressive in its season opener last Thursday.

The men – playing the program's first soccer game in 36 years -- beat the nation's top-ranked junior college squad, New York City's Monroe College, 1-0.

Monroe has won the past two national championships, yet it was held to just one shot.

The women – playing the program's first soccer game ever – went to Texas and defeated Angelina College, 5-3.

In the men's win, Edoardo Duchini scored in the 55th minute off an assist from Guilherme Soares Martins. “

To get MDC's first goal in 36 years was my desire,” said Duchini, a native of Italy who is quickly learning English.

“I'm the ‘most happy’ person in the world.” MDC coach Giuseppe DePalo, who is also a native of Italy but has been in the U.S. for years, gambled a bit by keeping Duchini on the bench for the game's first 35 minutes.

“It was a difficult decision,” DePalo said. “Duchini is a back-to-the-goal player. We wanted to start the game aggressively. We wanted to press and disrupt (Monroe).”

To achieve that goal, DePalo started Alejandro Cumplido at forward. Once Duchini was inserted into the game, MDC played with two forwards.

“Alejandro is more mobile – a better-pressing striker,” DePalo said. “It worked.” The payoff came when Duchini – with his back to the goal – received Martins' pass.

On Duchini's second touch, he made a 180-degree turn and fired a low strike that found its mark on the left side of the net.

“When I scored, I didn't know what to feel,” Duchini said. “There were a lot of emotions all together, and there were a lot of teammates hugging me.”

MDC goalkeeper Samuel Cavo made just one save – but it was a big one as he stopped a Monroe shooter in the 85th minute.

“I can't say I expected to beat (Monroe),” DePalo said. “We're a new team. We've only been practicing together for three weeks. “But I'm also not surprised. I thought we would compete. We had a good game plan and our players performed well.”

Should MDC be ranked nationally after beating the two-time reigning national champs? “I couldn't care less,” DePalo said. “We're going to play hard whether we are ranked one or one million.”

As for the MDC women, they scored just 23 seconds into their first-ever game as Brazilian native Julia Gurgel hit the back of the net. Tessa Abreu made it 2-0 just 73 seconds later.

However, the score was tied 3-3 until MDC's Camila Martins Viera got the game-winner in the 78th minute.

Five minutes later, MDC got an insurance goal from Kyra Tuesta, and Ashley Fonseca made five saves to secure the win.

MDC lost 3-0 to Tyler on Saturday to complete its two-game road trip. Tyler is ranked fourth in the nation.

The women will play their home opener at 7 p.m. on Wednesday against Ave Maria.

MDC coach Ramiro Vengoechea was traveling back home from Texas and unavailable for comment. But LaSalle's Anthony Vuono, who coached Fonseca in high school, raved about the Sharks.

"Ashley has been playing at a high level for a long time," Vuono said of Fonseca, who has represented Honduras' Under-20 national team.

"(Vengoechea) is a great coach. He's one of the pioneers of girls' soccer in Miami, and he's perfect for MDC."

Read more at: <https://www.miamiherald.com/sports/college/state-college-sports/article291476505.html#storylink=cpy>