

# rolling together

soccer athletes compare their club experience to high school, while also welcoming new players

**The sun** set behind the soccer field, as hushed preparations and plans for the game circled the huddle.

"Usually before the game we huddle up and one of the captains that night or the goalie gives a motivational speech," senior Omarion Dilunga said. "It helps us by giving us what we need to prepare our minds for the game."

Returning to Varsity for his fourth and final year, Dilunga made it his goal to win as many games as possible. Unfortunately injuries caused his goal to shift throughout the season.

"The new goal was to just have fun and make memories," Dilunga said. "I've always come back because I love the sport and being able to play with friends."

Although going to SM North since his freshman year, junior Keirnan Gaughan saw the opportunity to finally try out for the Boys Soccer team for the first time after quitting club soccer.

"I wasn't really nervous to try out," Gaughan said. "I had a lot of friends and I talked to the coach before."

Gaughan was welcomed quickly and joined in their traditions. After their first game, and Gaughan's first goal, the team visited WingStop as a post-game team dinner.

"I felt welcomed because I was playing with a lot of my close

friends," Gaughan said. "I enjoyed getting dinner with teammates because it was fun to relax after games."

Playing on Varsity all three years of his high school career, junior Patrick Blas-Abascal was able to also play on competitive club teams during the off season.

"The age gap is very different," Blas-Abascal said. "I'm playing with kids my age and have more developed skills. It's a lot faster in high school than in club."

In addition to playing club year round, junior Cody Guzman came back to high school soccer for his third year. Guzman took on more leadership as a veteran to the team.

"The biggest reason I enjoy high school more is the sense of community," Guzman said. "Being around my teammates every day at training and games really builds a family mentality between everyone. I love the community, my teammates and my coach. I became a better leader this year, I had a more impactful role."

With a common trend of six out of the 15 person team playing soccer for over 10 years of their lives, Guzman, Gaughan and Blas-Abascal all shared an admiration for the sport.

"[Soccer] means everything to me," Blas-Abascal said. "It's my way out, from stress, from school, from work." *story by macy williams*

**Standing in a line,** junior Cody Guzman and the varsity team listen to the national anthem before their game against Olathe West at CBAC on Oct. 15. "The season was tough and we were battling injuries the whole season," Guzman said, "but even late in the year as a team, we came out, played our game and competed even with one of the top schools." *photo by ethan newport*



**While advancing the field,** senior Luke Her dribbles the ball at SM North against SM West on Oct. 22. "I was feeling a little nervous during the start but eventually warmed up," Her said. "My favorite part of the season was the memories I made with my teammates." *photo by logan wallace*



**As he travels,** junior Patrick Blas-Abascal tries to run past an opponent from Lawrence Free-State at SM North on Sept. 17. "The best from this season was all the laughs we had at practice and the progress we made not just as individuals, but as a team towards the end of the season," Blas-Abascal said. *photo by tyree shadden*



**With heads bowed,** junior Nathan Stigers and his team listen to junior Cody Guzman discuss a new strategy to use when they face off against Lawrence Free-State in the second half of the game on Sept. 17 at SM North. "I was feeling very frustrated because we were struggling as a team and it was our most publicized game," Stigers said. "I knew people had come to this game just for us to lose like always. So this game actually had meaning compared to the rest because everyone's friends and family were there." *photo by tyree shadden*

## in the zone

soccer players share their favorite songs they get hype to before a game



"My favorite pre-game song was 'Do What I want', by Lil Uzi Vet because they played it before every home game and it got the team pumped."

**collin bruson, 9**



"My favorite pregame song was 'Los 4 Ases' because it made me feel like Lana with my ball control."

**roberto gomez, 11**

