

# No. 2 ranked Mustangs stay undefeated

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**W**ith an overall record of 11-0-1 and a conference record of 3-0, the MSU men's soccer team looks to hold on to its undefeated record and No. 2 ranking in the nation. Last season, the Mustangs finished 5th in the conference with an overall record of 13-6-3 and a conference record of 4-5-0. While the Mustangs did make it to the second round in playoffs, their run ended with a 1-0 loss to St. Mary's. The team looks to bounce back from its short playoff run in the 2023 season.

Master's Business Administration student and team captain Jack Larkin attributed the team's success so far this year to the players' attitudes.

"It's not about being afraid of being great," Larkin said.

The team is not letting the title of being undefeated or their ranking in the nation distract them from the game they constantly show up to play.

"Pressure is a privilege, and we just have to keep working hard every day and not taking any days off," Larkin said.

"Everyone accepts the pressure, but we all understand that we are here to keep the tradition going," social work sophomore Conner Lewis added.

With the team practicing 4-5 times a week, there is always room to improve individual skills.

"Each practice is different with a different point of focus," Lewis said.

Since MSU hired Michael Meachum as head coach in 2018, the Mustangs have ranked in the top five of their conference every season.

Business Management senior and forward Mere Escobar said maintaining that winning tradition is important to the team.

"When you come to MSU, it's expected, so it's pretty much living up to it, and hopefully, we can continue to keep going strong," senior forward Mere Escobar said.

Marketing senior and middle fielder Daniel Yu echoed Escobar's sentiment, and added that the team is constantly trying

to elevate its performance.

"Coming to MSU, you always want to be the best, and I think it's something we all wanted to do. We aren't surprised by it, but every game, we are just trying to do better and be better," Yu said.

One factor the team attributes its success to is a strong team dynamic. Team bonding activities are one of the most common ways to build a solid foundation within a team. With most of the team having played during the 2022 season, the Mustangs already had a solid foundation to work with.

Escobar said Meachum had been adamant from the beginning on continuing to build team unity.

"Off the field, we had some pool parties and stuff, or our coach would host, so I think they definitely helped us play better as a team on the field," Escobar said.

Yu added that the activities have aided the team's on-field chemistry.

"We always have our team bondings, and I think it helps us to get along. The boys get along really well on the field and off the field. I feel like it shows we get along on the field," Yu said.

Throughout the team's undefeated streak, the Mustangs have had some memorable victories.

St. Mary's beat the Mustangs in the playoffs last season, but in September the Mustangs had the opportunity to repay the favor.

Lewis said getting revenge on St. Mary's was his standout moment of the season so far.

"My favorite memory from this year is going to St. Mary's and beating them at their home field," Lewis said.

Larkin said a different road trip stood out to him.

"I think the first win. It's always nice to get off the mark with a win. So I think the first win up in Utah, especially since we were the away team and we had to fly up there, and it was a nice two days. I think that would have to be it," Larkin said.

Moving forward, Larkin said the team is taking nothing for granted, and treating each of its opponents equally.

"I'm not going to say one and give them the big head, but I

think every team is decent, and every game is going to be difficult, especially since we are one of the better teams in it. I think they will play us better than anyone else," Larkin said.



PHOTO BY STEPHANIE GARCIA | THE WICHITAN

**At the end of the game, team members share hugs as the MSU men's soccer team remains undefeated, Oct. 11.**



PHOTO BY STEPHANIE GARCIA | THE WICHITAN

**Midfielder Samuele Muroni (17) is congratulated by his teammates for scoring the game's first goal, Oct. 11.**



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**Liam Pritchard (22) joins in with Jack Larkin (6) and Johan Juarez (24) to celebrate after netting the second goal of the game, Oct. 11.**