

Record season comes to an end

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REPORTER

The MSU men's soccer team lost against the Colorado State-Pueblo Thunderwolves on Friday, Dec. 1, during the third round of the NCAA Division II playoffs, marking the first loss for the Mustangs.

Going into the game, the Mustangs were ranked No. 2 nationally and had yet to lose a game, keeping their undefeated streak of 20-0-1. The Thunderwolves were ranked No. 16, but the Mustangs focused on how they would play instead of how the other team would.

Nathan Toledo, management senior, gave insight into how the team prepped for the game a week prior.

"We prepared similarly to how we prepare for every game, in that we focused more on how we were going to play. We usually tried to not focus too much on the opponent and really focus on us and our style of play," Toledo said.

Although the stakes for this game were high, the Mustangs had a home-field advantage and went in knowing what they had to do in order to win.

"Going into the game, just as in games before, the team was locked in. Everybody understood their assignments, and honestly, we were confident in our team's ability," Toledo said.

The match was neck and neck for the entirety of the first half. Going back and forth between both ends of the field, but neither team could score a goal. The first half had many fouls by both teams, and the Thunderwolves received a yellow card.

Going into the second half, there was nervous tension in the stands, but the Mustangs knew the team they were playing

was going to be defensive.

"We knew the team we were playing would be very organized and defensive, so it wasn't a surprise that we were 0-0. We came out into the second half with the same planning mind, defend the set pieces and throw-ins and go score a goal," Toledo said.

Unfortunately for the Mustangs, the Thunderwolves scored the game's first goal, and a yellow card was awarded to Mustang Liam Pritchard, exercise physiology junior, and the Thunderwolves were given a free kick.

This goal was scored by the Thunderwolves' Ricardo Schmitt, assisted by Carlos Oliveira and Shjon Andrews. The 13 minutes left in the game, provided a shift in both teams. The Thunderwolves were ecstatic, but the Mustangs were more determined to converge on a play.

Even though the Mustangs were determined to score and continued to fight hard until the very end, they could not convert and lost the game 1-0 to the Thunderwolves.

In the end, the Mustangs were held to only three shots on goal, which has not been done since 2016.

Although this loss ended the historic 18-game winning streak the Mustangs had, the team built a bond that will carry over into the next season.

"Something particularly special about this team was how unified we were off the field. I've been a part of many talented teams over the years, and what made this team stand out was how close we all were. There weren't a bunch of small cliques and groups and arguments. We were a bunch of guys who all found a way to get along and chase a common goal. We know the season didn't end up the way we wanted



PHOTO BY STEPHANIE GARCIA | THE WICHITAN

Liam Pritchard (22) attempts to steal the ball from Dylan Zavatini (2), Dec. 1.

it, but there were so many successes along the way that I hope us older guys were able to set the standard for all the younger guys here at MSU," Toledo said.

Toledo believes that the younger group of guys on the team are ready to keep building their success off of what the seniors are leaving behind.



PHOTO BY STEPHANIE GARCIA | THE WICHITAN

Liam Pritchard (22) sets up a play against Ryan Nun (99), Dec. 1.



PHOTO BY STEPHANIE GARCIA | THE WICHITAN

The MSU soccer team mourns the loss of the third round of NCAA Division II Championships against Colorado State-Pueblo, Dec. 1.