

# Juarez excited for new beginning with MidAmerica Nazarene



Noah Juarez signed his letter of intent to play soccer for MidAmerica Nazarene University last May alongside Pioneer coach Kevin Wardlaw.

Noah Juarez has always wanted to play collegiate soccer and he wasn't ready to give up the sport after playing two years at Johnson County Community College.

Juarez, who is a 2016 Louisburg High School graduate, was looking for a new landing spot when his time with JCCC was up. He found the perfect spot not too far from home.

Early in the summer, Juarez signed his letter of intent to play for MidAmerica Nazarene University and he is excited to join the Pioneer program.

"I'm so thrilled to be playing for such a great school," Juarez said. "The academic side and soccer is at a very high level and I'm blessed to have the opportunity."

Juarez

will be joining a very competitive MidAmerica Nazarene program that finishes toward the top of the Heart of America Conference each year and he will see playing time in the midfield. He will play under coach Kevin Wardlaw, who has led the Pioneers to the national semifinals twice, including a runner-up finish in 2015.

Last season, the Pioneers finished with a 12-7 record and lost in the conference semifinals, but Juarez believes his new team can accomplish big things this year.

“We have very high expectations in our league,” Juarez said. “We plan to finish first in our league, but if not that, then definitely in the top 3. We have one of the most competitive leagues in the nation, so it will be a tough test.

“Individually, my role isn’t to score the most goals or be the main man. I just want to be someone who can control the midfield and control the tempo of the game. As long as I stay disciplined, focused, and have a high work rate, things will fall into place.”

After finishing his two years at JCCC, Juarez found out he had to have surgery on his foot and he knew the process back from that was going to be a difficult one.

“I was

a little worried the beginning of the season because I had foot surgery in May and had to place a screw in my 5th metatarsal bone,” Juarez said. “It was a long and tedious process but I was just about at 100 percent by the beginning of preseason. It has definitely been something to get used to, and I’ve had to adjust how I play a tad, but I am still looking to be a vital piece to the MNU program.”



**Noah Juarez scores a goal on a bicycle kick his senior year for the Wildcats.**

Juarez, who is majoring in business management and leadership, almost didn't commit to MidAmerica as he had an opportunity to play somewhere else last spring but a last-minute surprise kept him closer to home.

“I was about to commit to North Park University (Chicago) all throughout the spring semester and had a Division 2 school in Miami, Berry University, who had just won the National Championship last season in contention as well. It wasn’t until May when I found myself in contention with MNU.

“I had a teammate from JCCC who had committed to MNU the year before me, and after talking to him and the help from my club coach, Daouda Kante, things started to develop a little more at MNU. After a couple of meetings with Coach Wardlaw, I found where I belonged.”

Juarez was a big part of the Wildcat soccer program in his four seasons. Not only did he start all four years of high school, he earned all-Frontier League and all-state honors each season.

In his senior year, Juarez led the Wildcats with 18 goals and had seven assists as he was one of several players to help Louisburg to a fourth-place finish at state – the best finish in program history.

After finding some success at JCCC, fitting into the Pioneer team hasn’t been a problem for Juarez and his transition has been seamless thanks to his new coach.

“I have been fortunate to start my first few scrimmages, although, it hasn’t been easy,” he said. “There are only 10 local kids on the team where the rest are internationals. The competition is very high. I have been starting in the center

defensive midfield, but I have also been utilized as an attacking mid as well.

“The coaching at MNU has been a very good change for me. MNU plays a very possessive style of soccer where I can flourish. I have learned a lot already and pushed to new limits. Coach Wardlaw is a very intense, analytical person and only wants success for the team and us individually in the classroom.”