

# Espina-Roca excited to join MidAmerica Nazarene soccer



*Toby Espina-Roca played a big role for the Louisburg boys soccer team the last few years and he is hoping to do the same at MidAmerica Nazarene.*

Toby Espina-Roca has had a ball at his feet ever since he was five years old.

Growing up in Argentina, soccer – or futbol – was something that became a passion of his and it was easy to see why. Soccer is probably the most popular sport in many countries outside the United States, including Argentina.

After moving to the United States later in life, the love for the sport continued to grow. Espina-Roca always wanted the opportunity to play past high school level.

With four years of the Louisburg High School program under his belt, Espina-Roca caught the eyes of a few coaches, including those at MidAmerica Nazarene University.

So much so that they offered him spot with the Pioneers and the rest is history. Espina-Roca signed with MidAmerica Nazarene last spring and is gearing up to join the program this upcoming season.

“For me to sign at the college level was a huge accomplishment and it was one of my main goals ever since I came to the U.S.,” Espina-Roca said. “I think the coaches and players at

MidAmerica see me as a good fit. When I practiced with them, everyone seemed to enjoy being there and also how how successfully they are by just wanting it more than others.”

The Pioneers were one of the top teams in the Heart of America Conference last season as they finished with a 14-4-3 record and earned a spot in the national tournament.



***Louisburg’s Toby Espina-Roca signed his letter of intent last spring to play soccer at MidAmerica Nazarene University. Seated next to Toby are his parents Valeria Roca and Marcelo Espina. Standing (from left) is Louisburg head coach Bobby Bovaird, Toby’s grandmother Gladys Lambertucci and Louisburg assistant coach Ben York.***

MidAmerica is hoping Espina-Roca can fit right in to their winning culture and he will look to play on the defensive side for the Pioneers.

“They see me as a player with good potential and they’ve seen how I fit in with some of the guys already due to a lot being hispanic,” Espina-Roca said. “As of now I will be in my natural position, which is right-back, but in the future that might change.”

Espina-Roca was a big part of the Wildcat soccer program for the last three seasons. He started as a defender his sophomore and junior seasons, before switching to the midfield this past

year.

In his senior campaign, he earned second team All-Frontier League and all-state honors as he tallied six goals and five assists for the Wildcats.

“Louisburg has helped me become the person I am today,” Espina-Roca said. “Looking back at those summer training sessions and conditioning nights, everything was worth it. I’m forever thankful for all the memories that were made with past teammates and coaches. I’ve had two great head coaches and amazing assistant coaches who helped me become the player and person I am today, and that will always be in my heart.”

Now he is ready to see what he can accomplish with the Pioneers and he is looking forward to the challenge of playing at the college level.

“My goals for my first year is mainly to put the hard work in,” Espina-Roca said. “I really wanna get varsity minutes and I’ve been preparing myself for that, but to also enjoy the first year and make great memories out of it. I can’t wait until the first practices start. It’s something I’m really looking forward to.”