

Picture Perfect: Monroe and Perth Amboy Players Demonstrate Sportsmanship and Respect During Soccer Game

Pablo Hoyos adheres to a certain set of ideals and principles when he represents himself and his school on the soccer field for Perth Amboy. Alex Mancinelli is no different when he competes for Monroe. The two players crossed paths in a memorable fashion when their teams met on Sept. 21 in Monroe. Hoyos is a senior midfielder and captain for Perth Amboy. He takes his role seriously, which he showed in the late stages of that match.

Monroe was ahead, 5-0, but Hoyos had possession of the ball and was determined to play hard until the final whistle. So when he saw some space inside midfield as time was winding down, he made one last run toward the goal. He was being pursued on the play by Mancinelli, a senior from Monroe. The two, who had no prior connection, had been near each other on the field for much of the night.

Then, with the game practically over, Hoyos suddenly went down, after a painful cramp in his right calf sent him crashing to the turf.

"There was just six seconds left," Hoyos said. "I was still playing hard because that's the way I play all the time. You have to go hard all game. I had the ball about 30 yards behind the box. I saw some open space, and whenever I see that, I try to make a run up. I was going to do a turn and then my leg gave out on me. It was pretty bad, but it's part of the game."

What took place next made the sequence special. As Hoyos was writhing in agony from the cramp, teammates ran toward his side and assistant coach Tim Sheaffer rushed off the bench. But one other person was there before any of them - Mancinelli from Monroe. And despite the score, the time on the clock and the fact that he was winded himself, his instant response was to offer his rival comfort and support. In a special moment captured by photographer Sue Knotts, Mancinelli helped to straighten the cramped leg of Hoyos as an impressed Sheaffer and Perth Amboy player Miguel Jacinde look on.

It was an image that highlights the mutual respect that's being celebrated and encouraged during NJSIAA Sportsmanship Week (Oct. 18-24), sponsored by JAG-One Physical Therapy.

"We covered each other a decent amount during the game," Mancinelli said. "He went down, and I knew helping him out was the right thing to do. It was Senior Night and there was a lot of energy, but other people come before it. I just wanted to make sure everyone was okay. He was on the ground, and I was fine, so I just thought I would help him until the trainer came out and could help him out even more."

Mancinelli was also carrying forth a trait which he's followed during his time around the Monroe program, which began while watching his brother, Michael, a 2019 graduate who also played for the Falcons.

"Respect and sportsmanship are very important," he said. "We don't want to be looked at as a dirty team or a team that's not respectful of others. You want to have a high standard."

Monroe coach Steve MacKenzie was proud of his player.

"It was a great reflection of him as an individual," he said. "That's the type of person he is, and it goes to his family. Hopefully that's the stuff that rubs off and represents us as a program and a community. We have good players who are always looking to assist and make a conscious effort of thinking about our opponents."

Hoyos was surprised, and grateful, to look up from the ground amidst his pain to see the opposing player who had just been racing nearby showing concern and lending help.

"I wasn't expecting anyone to help me out other than the trainer," he said. "I really appreciated the help that he gave me. I look up to that a lot. It should always be like that. Sportsmanship is number one."

Perth Amboy's Jacinde, the other player in the picture, was also impressed by the thoughtfulness shown by Mancinelli.

"I love those type of players who will help their opponents no matter what," Jacinde said. "I was happy that he did that. It's a reason that I love the sport."



Top: Alex Mancinelli from Monroe
Bottom: Pablo Hoyos from Perth Amboy



Photo credit: Sue Knotts