

Family, Dedication, and Heart: Fernando Martinez Steps Up for Senior Game

By Colton Walters

When junior Fernando Martinez took the field on Senior Night, held over Family Weekend, he wasn't just playing for his team, but he was playing for his family. With his grandparents in the stands all the way from El Salvador, everything that happened in the game had a deeper meaning. For Martinez, the highlight of the night was simple. "My grandparents. It meant a lot since they came all the way from El Salvador."

Their visit gave him an extra spark of motivation. During a key play, Martinez found himself in a scoring position. "Frank Vasquez set me up perfectly, and I just kicked it and hoped it went in," he remembered. It was a moment of emotion. "I really wanted to score in front of my grandparents because they came from so far away just to watch me."

Senior Night was a big deal for everyone, but especially for Martinez. "I was the only junior that played, so there was a lot of pressure to do good for the seniors," he said. Despite the nerves, the team rose to the occasion. The locker room before the game was extremely energetic. "Everybody was happy and the locker room was decorated," he said. "The coach gave a great speech that kept us confident."

Balancing the demands of school, soccer, and life isn't easy, but Martinez

has a system that works. "I always try to do homework so I can have free time for soccer and my girl," he said. His honest, down-to-earth attitude reflects his commitment to both academics and athletics, a model for younger players looking up to him.

And when it comes to advice to younger players, Martinez keeps it simple. "Always train more and give 100% at all times," he said. "Be healthy and eat good." It's the kind of advice that shows maturity as both an athlete and a person.

His teammate Alik Mboya, a sophomore who scored his first goal of the season that night, had the same team-first mentality. "Seeing my teammates shedding tears of joy made me emotional too," Mboya said. "Now I'm look-

ing forward to my own Senior Night." Senior Frank Vasquez, also from El Salvador, is one of the key players on the team. He said senior night was "Very special because it felt like the game was all about me and everybody on the team supported me." For Martinez, those moments of emotion and teamwork define what soccer is all about.

As the crowd cheered and families snapped photos, Martinez's grandparents smiled proudly from the stands. For them, the long trip was worth every mile. For Martinez, the night was more than a game, it was a memory he'll carry for the rest of his life.



Fast Facts: Fernando Martinez

Grade: Junior

Highlight Moment:
Playing in front of grandparents visiting from El Salvador

Pre-game Mood:
"Everybody was happy and the locker room was decorated."

Balancing Act:
Homework first, then soccer and social time

Advice to Young Players:
"Train more, give 100%, be healthy, and eat good."