Opening day battle



PHOTO | LILY RAND

Men's soccer team gather in a huddle before their matchup against Monroe University at Jess Dow Field on Thursday, Aug. 27.

Owls focus on improvement as new season starts

By Lily Rand
Photo Editor

The men's soccer team opened its season with a 3–1 loss to New York–based Monroe University on Thursday, Aug. 27 at Jess Dow Field, despite creating several opportunities to take control of the game.

The Owls entered halftime trailing 1–0 before forward Giancarlo Ciotoli scored early in the second half to tie the game. Monroe responded with two goals later in the half to secure the victory.

"We should have won the game in the first half, but that's how the game goes sometimes," interim head coach Reuben Ayarna, said. "You have so many chances, you don't score, and then the game turns around."

The Owls generated much of its pressure early in the game. The Owls finished with 11 shots compared with Monroe's seven, while both teams recorded four shots on goal.

Ayarna said the season opener gave several players their first look at the physicality of NCAA Division II soccer.

"I think the physicality of it, because we have a lot of guys that hadn't played in Division II before," Ayarna said. "Today was a test for them to recognize how physical the league can be."

Ciotoli provided the only goal of the night, bringing the Owls back into the game. Despite the final result, he said the performance provided the team with motivation moving forward.

"Obviously, not the result we wanted, but it's a frustrating one, and I think there's some motivation with frustration," Ciotoli said.

Defense and team's captain, Jah Nyanforh, also pointed to missed opportunities as one of the biggest challenges. He said the Owls created several chances within the opening 20 minutes but were unable to convert them.

Nyanforh said the team entered the game focused on winning, especially with the advantage of playing at home. Students and other supporters filled Jess Dow Field as part of Thursday Night Lights, creating an energetic atmosphere for the Owls' first game of the season.

The Owls coaching staff will now focus on improving the team's fitness and decision-making on the ball.

Ayarna said players are still learning how to play together and expects improvement as the team becomes healthier and more familiar with one another.

For the players, the opening loss does not change their expectations for the season.

Nyanforh said the team wants to use the result as a starting point, while Ciotoli said the Owls plan to continue competing with the mentality they brought into their opener.

"Number four always says 'Lionheart,' and that's just something we take with us — just be a lion, have a lion heart, keep going, keep fighting," Ciotoli said.

New leadership takes the soccer field



PHOTO | SCSU ATHLETICS

Reuben Ayarna is introduced as the interim head coach of the university men's soccer team.

By Noah Nunez
General Reporter

After serving as assistant coach for the men's soccer team for three years, Reuben Ayarna has taken over for Kevin Anderson and has kicked off his new role as interim head coach for the men's soccer team.

Ayarna has had a long history with soccer, from playing to watching, with memories as far back as he can recall.

"I've been playing since I was 4. I've been watching since I can't remember. But I started understanding it at the age of 5, 6, like I started understanding what's going on," Ayarna said.

Growing up in an environment surrounded by soccer, Ayarna took to the sport over others, knowing that he had a talent for it.

He had an understanding that he had a gift for the sport and had real skill to go along with his knowledge.

With such a long history with the game, Ayarna took his childhood hobby as seriously as he could, joining multiple teams and playing professionally for several years.

Playing for Finland and Sweden throughout 2008 to 2021, his retirement afterwards would lead him into the coaching scene.

"When I retired in 2021, I got into coaching a little bit, in the summer helping a major team in Sweden," Ayarna said. "When I moved back to the States in 2022, I coached at Vermont Green, and that's where it took off, so I've been coaching, I say, for 5 years now"

After a bit more time spent helping Boston College, Ayarna made his way to the university with the help of Anderson, who gave him a position as an assistant joining the university in 2023.

When Anderson left his position, Ayarna began approaching the game with his own attitude.

"Our mentality is to play to win. Of course, you know you could do it, but the reality you may not win every game, but if the mentality is there to play to win, that builds character, that builds strength, that builds team, you need team community," Ayarna said.

Ayarna values the players he coaches above all others, not only as players but also for their performance in school.

Ayarna and the entire athletics team work to make sure students understand the reality of being a student athlete and offer guidance.

"Balance is key; you have to settle practices in a different way because you have to understand any student-athlete, just spend the whole day at practice knowing that the kids got a paper to write, or have to go to the library," Ayarna said.

A new season begins



By Draven Dabrowski
Sports Columnist

School is back in session, and with it comes the return of fall sports. As students are settling back into classes, athletes at the university are back on the field and court, ready for another season.

The biggest news coming this week from the university athletics department is the naming of C.J Moran as the new head coach of the men's and women's swimming and diving program.

After three decades under the leadership of the late Tim Quill, the program now turns to Moran, who brings prior experience with the Owls.

Moran is a former four-year letterwinner for the Owls, competing from 1995 to 1999.

He also has previous coaching experience serving as an assistant coach for the university from 2000–01 and again from 2002–05. During his time with the program Moran has been a part of 35 Northeast 10 Conference Championships

In the press release announcing his hiring, Moran expressed what returning to the university and taking over the program means to him.

"I am extremely honored to be chosen as the next head coach of the Southern Swimming and Diving Program," Moran said. "I am excited for the opportunity to continue to work with our student athletes and to further pursue the tradition of excellence of the university Swimming and Diving that was set forth by my predecessors Dr. Bruce Hutchinson, Tim Wise, and Tim Quill,"

The university swim and dive team just came off an emotional season. After the sudden passing of Coach Quill, the Women's team captured its sixth consecutive and 18th overall NE10 title.

Turning to the fall season, volleyball is a team to keep an eye on as they begin a new campaign.

Last season, the women's volleyball team finished 16–8, making its mark in the NE10 playoffs before falling short in the semifinals against Bentley University.

The Owls return with several for the 2026–27 season, including setter Kimi Mitchell, a sophomore, right side hitter, Sydney Bennett a graduate student and outside hitter Kerrigan Habing, a junior.

The team is coming off two wins in which it swept both opponents in three sets, first defeating Queens College and then Franklin Pierce University in the Tri-Match on Saturday, Sept. 5th.

The Owls currently sit at 6–1, with their only loss coming against Rollins College.

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