

Male cheerleader flies on this year's varsity team

By **Sarah Barber**,
Online Co-Editor-In-Chief

As the DGS coed varsity cheer team lines up in front of the student section each Friday night, they form their stunt groups before launching their five flyers into extensions, where one stands out among them: sophomore Marcus Medina, the Mustangs' first-ever boy flyer, who had never cheered until this year.

"I was actually a base at first, but that didn't work out. It's so much easier for me to fly than base," Medina said. "It's hard because I try to do as much as I can, but I'm not used to it like other cheerleaders are."

Medina, who tried out for DGS cheer in the spring at the suggestion of a friend, had never cheered prior to tryouts and has no background in gymnastics or tumbling. He has been cheering with the Mustangs since he made the team in June, originally as a base. However, after testing out flying with some of his teammates at a few open gyms,



Marcus Medina performs a cheer on Friday night at an away football game against Willowbrook.

Photo by **Ariel Oh**

they brought the idea to their coach.

"Marcus wanted to fly, and the team [wanted him to] too. They had been trying some stunts at open gyms on the weekends. I thought why not give him a shot. It was definitely a new choice for us, but the second I saw Marcus in the air, I knew I made the right choice," head coach Shannon Lahey said. Lahey has been the head

coach of the DGS varsity team for seven years, but has been on the coaching staff for 10.

Switching from a base to a flyer is not a simple task. This was expressed by junior and ex varsity cheerleader Nick Schmidt-Bailey, who left the DGS cheer program this year to pursue the sport at the all-star level.

"Being a flyer is really scary... you have to be completely in trust

of the people under you, it's constantly a trust fall. I've seen flyers fall on the ground, hit their heads and get concussions before. [They] break their arms, break their legs; it's horrifying. Moving from a base to a flyer especially... I can't even imagine how difficult that would be because you're so used to being in control," Schmidt-Bailey said.

Junior Josie Gadzala has been a flyer at the

varsity level for three years. She explained some of the technicalities that flyers require to have success on a varsity mat.

"You're expected to know the basics... so that's doing extensions, when the bases' arms are above their heads... You [need] to have balance and you have to be able to pull up your body, because you could be the biggest flyer on the team or you could be the tiniest one, but the tiniest one could feel heavier because they're not pulling up their weight as much as the other flyers," Gadzala said.

Medina feels that he's under a lot more stress due to the team's committed practice schedule, but he has also experienced many benefits from joining the sport.

"I definitely work harder for my goals now, and I know what it's like to try and succeed," Medina said.

Medina and the rest of the Mustangs' varsity cheerleaders can be seen throughout the football season in front of the student section. The next DGS home game will be on Oct. 11 against Morton.

Cohesion kickstarts boys soccer to attack end of season's goals

By **Greyson Martinescu**,
Assistant Photo Editor

After making a run in the playoffs last year, the boys' varsity soccer team hopes that a more cohesive roster will help them recover after a set of defeats to start the 2019 season.

As of the start of a brand new season, the Mustangs have added a decent amount of juniors and senior players on the varsity roster. Coach Nathan Terry elaborated on how the training has shifted from their last season's varsity team.

"Between this year and last year, overall there seems to be more cohesion in the group, and talent wise, we are more ahead," Terry said.

"From a coaching standpoint, we are now focusing on getting the details right in training, and perfecting set pieces are now a focus [for us] on a daily basis," Terry said.

Junior center-midfielder

Jesus Plata described his involvement on his first year with the DGS varsity soccer team.

"It's been a good experience playing with my teammates, but I have to learn some new things as well," Plata said.

Plata also believes that both the offense and defense are up to par.

"We been doing well on both sides. It's just a matter of practicing and getting the repetitions in," Plata said.

In order to have consistent results in the realm of soccer, both sides of the team must provide strong defense and an offense that constantly creates chances on the opponent's side. Terry commented on which side he believes works well.

"Traditionally, I think we always organized in defense; we still have given up a lot of goals over recent years," Terry said. He also mentioned the change he has seen in regards to



The boys' varsity soccer team improves their record with securing a 9-1 win against Proviso West last week.

Photo by **Rachel Ley**

lack of defense.

"Coming out of the summer league and taking a look, Coach Stapleton and myself are very pleased with the progress we have shown on the defensive side," Terry said.

The biggest obstacle Plata believes the team faces is, "finishing on the final third in the opponents box." Plata said

After a series of defeats this season, the team is still looking forward to showing the true potential that could shine when performing out on the field. "We have a lot of excellent

guys that enjoy the game. They have the ability to be cohesive together. Since the season started, the confidence level has gone up. We've played well, but it hasn't got us results," Terry said.

Junior Gabriel Gray, who plays attacker for varsity, gave his input on what could be improved. "I think we can defend very effectively, but I think passing the ball in the midfield and getting the ball to our attackers is our main issue," Gray said.

Gray also commented on how the groups' chemistry

is. "I know all our players work very hard personally and together. We also have a great team relationship, so I think continuing to work hard as the season progresses will be a good thing for all of us to have," Gray said.

Throughout the season, the boys' varsity soccer team will continue to look at defeat as an opportunity for learning and growth. With playoffs still about a month away, the coaches and players hope to get their foundations and dedicated work in training to pay off.