

Drew Pack has had success being in the right place at the right time on the soccer field.

In the process, Pack has scored plenty of goals and created a lot of scoring chances for the New Hope High School boys soccer team.

Now Pack will have the opportunity to do the same thing for the Mississippi University for Women men's soccer team.

On Monday, the New Hope High senior forward announced his plans to continue his soccer career at The W at a signing ceremony in the school's multi-purpose room.

"I didn't want to hang the cleats up yet," said Pack, who had planned to attend Mississippi State University and go into the Business school. "I am not going to."

Pack said Victor Gomez, who served as coach of the New Hope junior high boys and girls soccer coach, had been on him all year about going to The W. He said Gomez talked to his brother, Carter, who also is a member of the New Hope soccer program, to arrange a conversation with BJ Pheasant, the men's soccer coach at The W. Drew said he texted the coach, scheduled a visit to The W and knew pretty quickly what he was going to do after he received an offer to play there.

"It was very cool," Pack said learning about The W and the men's soccer program. "The program as a whole is going to get better when I am there."

Part of Pack's optimism stems from the fact he will join New Hope soccer teammates Josh Wilcox and Jared Ferraez at The W. Those three will reconnect with former New Hope players Cole Crawford, Trey Parnell and Jose Castillo at The W to give the men's soccer team a distinct local flavor.

That sits well with New Hope High soccer coach Andrew Olsen, who is excited about the prospects of watching so many of his former players at one place. He said Pack was part of a senior group that played with confidence and that mentality helped push the program to five district championships in a row, three Mississippi High School Activities Association (MHSAA) North Half title games in the last four years and a trip to the state title game in 2022.

This past season, New Hope finished 12-6-2 and lost to Lafayette in the Class 5A North Half title game. New Hope has won 57 games in the last four years.

“You can bank on the fact Drew was going to give 100% and fight for it every minute,” Olsen said. “He is always trying to get better and is always asking what he needs to do, and he is going to go out there and work on it and get better. We’re going to miss his presence next year.”

Olsen saw that attitude grow from when Pack was in the seventh grade through his senior season. He said Pack developed from a physical player who would try to body through every player into a skilled player who learned how to play to his strengths.

“You could see as he got older it started clicking with him, and in the past couple of years he had some good games for us,” Olsen said.

Pack said credits his maturation to growing stronger, getting faster and improving his technical skills. He understands the college game is played at a faster pace and that he will need to continue on an upward trajectory. When asked what he needs to work on to make the transition, Pack said, “Everything.”

Being able to develop in his own backyard presents a unique challenge that suits Pack perfectly because his knack for scoring goals usually puts him in the right place to take advantage of opportunities.

“It helps with it being close to home because I have grown up beside The W,” said Pack, who plans to study something associated with Business.