



Photos courtesy of NYCFC.

## MAKING THE JUMP TO MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

As a child, Vuk Latinovich enjoyed looking through an atlas, studying the flags and learning about the countries of the world. Playing soccer fueled his interest.

"I think that was partially tied to soccer, because there were players from so many different countries, so I always wanted to know where those countries were and what they looked like," he says.

Now, Latinovich takes the field with his international teammates as a defender for Major League Soccer's New York City FC.

Latinovich, a four-year player for UWM, graduated in December 2020 with his bachelor's degree in history. In January, NYCFC made him its third-round selection in the 2021 Major League Soccer SuperDraft. The club rewarded his strong

preseason with a spot on its first-team roster, an uncommon development for rookies. He debuted on May 1, 2021, as a substitute in a 2-0 victory vs. Philadelphia.

Latinovich is the fifth-ever UWM player to be drafted by an MLS team. His parents, both athletes, encouraged his love of the sport from an early age. "I saw a tape of me kicking the soccer ball around when I was little," Latinovich says. "It's just always been part of my life."

Even before he started high school at Brookfield Central in suburban Milwaukee, college coaches showed interest in recruiting him. He committed to UWM in his first year of high school. "I knew the coaches there very well, and it was 30 minutes from home," Latinovich says. "It

was a no-brainer."

UWM deployed him as a midfielder, and he excelled both on the field and in the classroom. He was a two-time All-Horizon League honoree who earned first-team all-league and second-team United Soccer Coaches All-North Region accolades as a junior in 2019. He missed his senior campaign when fall 2020 athletic events were canceled due to COVID-19.

But NYCFC gave Latinovich the chance to continue playing the sport he loves, and he's made the most of that chance. "It may sound corny," Latinovich says of being drafted and continuing to play soccer at the professional level, "but it was pretty gratifying to make my family proud."

🐾 – Kathy Quirk

## FOUR TEAMS CLAIM HORIZON LEAGUE TITLES

UWM celebrated a quartet of Horizon League team championships during the 2020-21 school year.

Both the women's and men's soccer teams won their respective league tournaments and competed in NCAA Tournaments. It was the 14th NCAA trip for the women's team, which advanced to the second round, while the men's team made its 10th NCAA appearance and first since 2013.

The women's cross country team claimed its second Horizon League crown in three seasons. Meg Swietlik cruised to the individual women's title by 25 seconds.

UWM's women's basketball team won a share of the Horizon League regular-season title and was rewarded with a berth in the Women's National Invitation Tournament, where the Panthers reached the second round. 🐾