

SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. - The best coach isn't necessarily the most successful one. The best coach is remembered long after the wins and losses mount. The best coach is someone like Miguel Hoyos.

Hoyos was a successful coach, sure, but that's not why former players gathered to send him off on his retirement from the Saratoga Wilton Soccer Club Sunday afternoon.

Life is a lot like soccer, Hoyos, who paints in his free time, said Monday afternoon at a studio on Beekman Street.

Hoyos explained the give-and-go situations that transpire throughout soccer games.

"Sometimes you give it and you don't receive it, but you give it and then the whole team and the whole group work together and it's easier to achieve goals," said Hoyos. "I think the game itself taught me to be the person that I am."

Hoyos used lessons on the soccer field translatable to any life situation, which made him such a beloved figure.

"Learning life lessons like following instructions, being part of the team to achieve a goal, defending or on the attack," said Hoyos. "That can be easily translated to be part of the work force and these are the common goals we have."

Soccer has been apart of Hoyos's life since his youth. Growing up in Columbia, soccer takes precedence as the top sport.

"For some of those South American countries, soccer is a religion," said former Saratoga Wilton Soccer Club president Peter MacDonald. "It's sort of this cherished thing."

Hoyos began coaching 30 years ago. He coached racetrack teams and programs in Long Island.

He coached in Columbia before moving to the United States. Around 1995 is when he

started coaching in Wilton.

Hoyos has been a fixture in the community since then and next month he and his wife of 41 years will move to Pittsburgh to be closer to family.

“You have people that are fantastic coaches, who really know the game tactically, technically and are good motivators and consistently have some of the best teams. Win championships, tournaments, etcetera, and certainly that’s true of Miguel,” said MacDonald. “But he’s a guy who he always wins the right way because for him it’s also about just how you conduct yourself and how you behave as a person, you know, being respectful and honoring the game.”

Hoyos developed his passion for life from his parents and grandparents.

“They had a lot of influence on me that working hard takes you places. Because one person can have a dream but then you become a sleeper instead. You got to wake up and make your dream a live thing,” said Hoyos. “But I think I developed a lot of my coaching philosophy by living to the fullest all my life. That’s what I’ve been trying to do and instill in my own daughters.”

Saratoga Wilton Soccer Club has teams with players from ages eight through 19. The club has boys and girls teams, and even though Hoyos only coached a few of the teams on a given year, he constantly hosted clinics to provide soccer lessons to thousands of kids throughout his time in the community.

Tess Turner has played for Hoyos the past two years. This year the team won the Eastern NY Premier Soccer League.

“He is great at inspiring confidence and getting the natural talent out of all the players. His practices are full of life lessons. He constantly reminds us to be grateful for what we

have and live our life passionately and make a difference every day,” said Turner. “He’s a role model. We see how hard he works for his family and artwork.”

Hoyos has coached teams that have won championships, but his greatest achievements might be the teams that didn’t win a championship. Instead those teams continued to get better as the year went along.

“I think those are some of his most cherished moments, and certainly some of the moments that I’ve enjoyed the most watching him. It’s taking a team that honestly isn’t that good at all and has literally no promise, taking them in September and then bringing them along slowly but surely, and doesn’t let them on,” said MacDonald. “He coaches them the same way he would coach a premier level team with in terms of his expectations and how he challenges and he what he expects. You see them at the end of the year and they look like a soccer team, so for me those are my favorite memories of Miguel and I think speak to the kind of person he is. At the end of the day as much as he’s a great coach and loves to coach a state championship team, he loves the underdog. I think he feels like an underdog. He had to leave his country. A guy who was definitely middle class in his own country had to come here pretty much with nothing.”

Hoyos won’t be coaching the Saratoga Wilton Soccer Club any longer, but his legacy will remain with the team thanks to a coaching guide with instructions on various drills created specifically for the appropriate age group.

One of Hoyos’s favorite sayings is, “find your own way.”

Hoyos might be gone from Saratoga Springs come next month, but he left his trail using his own way.

“Life is not only numbers. It’s love, feelings, touching. That’s what it’s all about,” said

Hoyos. “At the very end, it’s not how much money you have in your pocket, it’s how much love you can give and you can receive like in a give and go.”