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Dynamic Duo Growing into Role in Center of National Team's Defense

From Batman and Robin to Bert and Ernie to Frodo and Sam, duos have always been an important part of American life - the same can be said about American soccer.

Omar Gonzalez and Matt Besler may be turning into the dynamic duo in the center of the back line of the U.S. Men's National Team.

The pair has started five games together, and during that span the MNT is 3-0-2 including three shutouts.

"Before every game we always give each other a few things to work on and make sure we do right," Gonzalez said. "With each game, you need to say less and less just because you know what to expect from each other. The chemistry is definitely building, and hopefully we can put out some more shutouts because that's what we're on the field for."

For Besler, the key has been communication.

"Omar and I are talking to each other constantly throughout the game and that definitely helps us," Besler said. "I think we complement each other well, we both believe in each other. The key to the central defender partnership is being together, being on the same page."

They are considered two of the best defenders in MLS, collecting back-to-back Defender of the Year awards, with Gonzalez earning the honor in 2011 and Besler in 2012.

The two first linked up in the back line during this year's January camp, and first saw the field together in a 0-0 draw against Canada on Jan. 29 in Houston. They also played a key part in the MNT's historic 0-0 draw in World Cup Qualifying against Mexico in Estadio Azteca.

"The January camp gave us a chance to have Omar and Matt working basically side by side, day by day" said U.S. head coach Jurgen Klinsmann. "There they

developed a good understanding because they trained all month together. It is impressive to see how Omar and Matt take their roles, how confident they are now and they don't shy away from anything."

As the two young central defenders start to make a name for themselves on the international stage, they know that connection and coordination is crucial to a solid back line. For Gonzalez, that responsibility isn't solely between he and Besler.

"It starts from Tim Howard always being vocal, always keeping us in check. He gets us to get guys in the right position so we put out our fires before they start," Gonzalez said. "The whole back line has been good covering for each other. It's been good, honest, hard work, and everyone can see that."

With the different styles that teams around the world play, succeeding in the back line is all about adapting and backing each other up.

The U.S. currently sits at the top of the table with 10 points halfway through the Final Round of Qualifying for the 2014 FIFA World Cup.

Still, the three shutouts in the five games the talented defenders have started together isn't good enough for Besler, and if the MNT wants to make it to Brazil in 2014 there's still room to grow.

"We can't fall into the trap that things are great right now," Besler said. "We have to keep improving. We're working at it every day. We feel like it's in a good position right now, but we've got to keep getting better."