

Santa Ynez Wins Title for Fallen Teammate

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The Santa Ynez U-14 boys each wore a white star for their missing teammate, and they all shone brightly at the AYSO Section 10 All-Star Soccer Championships in Bakersfield.

Omar Rivera was unable to join his friends, having returned home just the night before after being hospitalized for almost two weeks in Templeton. He needed several surgeries after having his leg broken there during the team's previous tournament.

His teammates spent part of the last two weeks, crowding into his hospital room to tell him stories, sign his cast and vow to win the Sectional Championships for him. Each one wore a white star on their uniform sleeve in Omar's honor.

Santa Ynez won its pool with victories of 2-0 over Cutler-Orosi, 2-1 over Canyon Country and 4-0 over Fillmore. It then defeated Burbank 3-0 in the semifinals to draw Carpinteria in the championship match.

Carpinteria scored first, but Giovanni Ramirez tied the contest for Santa Ynez to send it into overtime. The match remained deadlocked after a pair of five-minute overtimes, sending it into a shootout.

Santa Ynez goalkeeper Raul Guzman blocked Carpinteria's first kick and also converted his team's first try. The team also got PK conversions from Colin Schoen, Carlos Zepeda and Ramirez to seal the victory.

Also contributing to the title for coach Ole Mikkelsen's squad were Chase Bianchi, Alexis Cobian-Reyes, Casey Everett, Daniel Gail, Jonathan Huizer, Bryce McKibbin, Jax Mikkelsen, Sam Pappas, Jose Rojas and Kyle Schoen.

With the championship, the Santa Ynez boys will join their U-14 Girls Viva la Pink team at the California State games at Cal State Bakersfield on March 27-28.

The team is looking for donations to help defray Omar's medical expenses. Donations can be made to the Omar Rivera Medical Fund (account 0102813763) at any branch of Santa Barbara Bank & Trust. Those with questions can contact Julie Everett at 350-1382 or go to the AYSO Region 180 web site at www.aysosyv.org.