

MY ODP EXPERIENCE

Madison McNamara

My name is Madison McNamara and I participated in the 98 Girls ODP Soccer Program. I have played soccer a long time, but ODP was something I have never experienced before. Making the State ODP Team was also unlike anything I have ever gone through. The journey was long, thrilling, scary, and it changed me for the better, mentally and physically. It was a little easier going through it with one of my teammates who also made the State Team.

My path started at Stonebrae Elementary during District ODP tryouts. Coming to District tryouts made me feel ODP was easy and it could be a lot of fun. There was nothing to be scared of, because it felt like something I had done many times before. But when I went to State ODP tryouts, I realized it was more than just some easy tryout with a bunch of girls having fun. These players weren't players that just loved playing soccer, they had a desire and the skill to be the best of the best. As the journey continued, I began to have that same feeling too, but I still wasn't super confident. When I went to Ventura, where they would make the final cuts for the State team, I was very nervous and I lacked confidence, but the whole time I was repeatedly told "You're playing with the best of the best!" What I finally realized was that I wasn't just playing with them, I was one of them. This gave me more confidence and made me work even harder to get on that State team. This worked well for me because I made the State team and ended my journey in Moscow, Idaho where I was playing against girls from 14 other states for a chance to make the Region Team. Even though I didn't make the next level, it was an incredible experience for me.

During ODP I got to know many new players and coaches. The coaches were strong, hard core soccer coaches who taught me to take criticism. Under them I had to learn from my mistakes. They pointed out what I did well and not so well, and they forced me to work harder and supported me to being a better player. The coaches were the ones who coached us but the players are the ones who pushed us to go farther. The players helped each other with our mistakes and complimented us on the things we did well. I got to meet many different players from all the other states and that was pretty cool. But I especially enjoyed playing with the girls from Cal North because after soccer we all began to become close teammates and friends. The opportunity to meet new people and make these connections was very exciting.

I think three key components to making the State ODP team were technical skills, like your first touch or how you keep the ball in tight spaces. Another key component was how you interacted with the other coaches and players because this also showed the evaluators how you represent your state, your club and yourself. The last key component they were looking for was whether you wanted it or not. If you had the desire to go to the next level, the desire to win and the desire to be a great player. These are three components I will try to focus on to become a better player.

ODP is something I thought was a great experience and something that I will remember for the rest of my life. I thought the journey, even with its ups and downs, was well worth it because physically and mentally I became a better player and a better person. I hope to participate in ODP again next year. For all girls and boys in Castro Valley I recommend they do ODP. It's an experience of soccer and life that you won't find anywhere else.