

## **MY ODP EXPERIENCE**

### **Zach Connolly**

My name is Zachery Connolly and I heard about ODP when I was ten years old. I knew I could not try out until I was 12, but it has always been a goal of mine to play at that level. The experience started with a local tryout at Stonebrae Elementary and ended for me with a trip to Oregon. From beginning to end it was a fun journey. At the beginning I was nervous because I wasn't sure how I was going to do. By the second camp in Ventura, I learned a lot from other players and started to relax and play better. When the final camp came in Oregon, we got to compete against players from the other 14 states in our region. I was more confident with my play and made some good friends.

I found that there were three keys to making the ODP team. One thing they look for is if you work together as a team. They want you to do what is best for your team, like making strong and accurate passes. Also, they expect you to be responsible for yourself on and off the field. They evaluate you even when you are hanging out at the hotel. You have to make good decisions as you are representing your state. Lastly, you must be open to criticism and be willing to learn. At the end they gave us an evaluation; now I am getting one-on-one training from one of the CV trainers to work on my lowest scores so I can improve in those areas. I hope to keep all these keys in mind for next year's tryouts.

One thing that made State ODP fun was that we got to meet other players in Northern California. It was interesting meeting new people because you got another point of view of how to play soccer. You also got to see the different teams in northern California, and I learned a lot from them. Although we got to meet players from California, it was very rewarding to meet players from different states too. They all had a different style of playing soccer. I learned from these players that size doesn't matter, because no matter how small they were, they played really hard.

ODP means a lot to me because I was able to meet many excellent players and personalities. It also it gave me exposure. For example, I got to meet pro players, and was able to talk to the national coach. If anyone in the Castro Valley Soccer Club is ever thinking about trying out for ODP, I would definitely recommend they do so because it is a great experience to represent your state and club.