



SOCCER PLAYERS at Richmond High School players form a circle for their pregame chant in memory of fallen teammate Juan Anaya. SHERRY LAVARS/TIMES

Pride on their side

Richmond players build soccer bond

By Ricardo Sanchez Jr.
TIMES STAFF WRITER

A translation wouldn't do the chant justice. It is a ritual to be seen and heard.

Richmond High School's boys soccer team passionately belts out the poetic verse on the field before every game.

"When they say it with all their heart," Oilers assistant coach Jorge Flores said, "that's when I know we're going to win."

The team's motivational cheer is an ode to fallen teammate Juan Anaya, who died in a car accident before the season. It is the Oilers' call to arms.

Vamos, vamos Aceiteros, vamos vamos a ganar, que esta barra quilomera, no te deja de alentar. (Let's go Oilers, we're going to win, because this loving crowd won't let you down.)

Every time the Aceiteros (Oilers) take the field, somehow the burden of financial struggles, cultural assimilation and academic pressures fade away. In a city plagued by violent crime, they face obstacles schools from the other side of the hill don't even dream of dealing with.

Still, the Oilers remain competitive every season.



KARL MONDON/TIMES

OILERS COACH Rene Siles says he's touched by "the strength of character and courage that some of these kids show day in and day out."

"I have been fairly successful in life according to most standards," said six-year Richmond coach Rene Siles, a software engineer for Sybase in Dublin. "And I am not into romanticizing things either, but I never had the strength of character and courage that some of these kids show day in and day out."

*"Vamos, vamos
Aceiteros, vamos,
vamos a ganar,
que esta barra
quilomera, no te
deja de alentar.
Veni, veni, canta con
migo que un amigo
vas a encontrar,
que con la man'o
de Juan, toda la
vuelta vamos adar."*

— Pregame chant
of Richmond High School's
boys soccer team

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WARF
CLIP
NEXT
Tuesday
Sacram

offs, TBA

BSAL girls basketball — League playoffs, TBA

BVAL boys basketball — De La Salle at Liberty, Antioch at Freedom, Pittsburg at Clayton Valley, 7 p.m.

BVAL girls basketball — Liberty at Carondelet, Freedom at Antioch, Clayton Valley at Pittsburg, 7 p.m.

DFAL boys basketball — Miramonte at Alhambra, Campolindo at Dublin, Northgate at College Park, Concord at Acalanes, Mt. Diablo at Las Lomas, 7 p.m.

DFAL girls basketball — Miramonte at Alhambra, Campolindo at Dublin, Northgate at College Park, Concord at Acalanes, Mt. Diablo at Las Lomas, 5:30 p.m.

EBAL girls basketball — San Ramon Valley at California, Amador Valley at Monte Vista, Livermore at Granada, 7 p.m.

Wednesday

JC women's basketball — Nor Cal playoffs in round

BCL boys basketball — BCL-East playoffs

BCL girls basketball — BCL-East playoffs

EBAL boys basketball — California at San Ramon Valley, Monte Vista at Amador Valley, Granada at Livermore, 7 p.m.

HAAL boys basketball — Arroyo at Castro Valley, 7 p.m.

Prep boys soccer — NCS playoffs, semifinals

Prep girls soccer — NCS playoffs, semifinals

Thursday, Feb. 23

JC baseball — Diablo Valley at Los Medanos, 2 p.m.

JC softball — Laney at Diablo Valley (doubleheader), 1 p.m.

BSAL boys basketball — League playoffs, TBA

BSAL girls basketball — League playoffs, semifinals, TBA

HAAL boys basketball — Castro Valley at Tennyson, 7 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 24

JC baseball — Ohlone at Diablo Valley, 2 p.m.; Los Medanos at Skyline Tournament, Skyline, TBA

JC men's basketball — State tournament, 1st round, TBA

JC women's basketball — Nor Cal playoffs, 1st round, TBA

ACCAL boys basketball — Richmond at Hercules, Encinal at Alameda, El Cerrito at Berkeley, Pinole Valley at De Anza, 7 p.m.

ACCAL girls basketball — Berkeley at El Cerrito, 4 p.m.; Hercules at Richmond, Alameda at Encinal, De Anza at Pinole Valley, 7 p.m.

BCL boys basketball — BCL-East semifinals, at Bentley, TBA

BCL girls basketball — BCL-East semifinals, at Bentley, TBA

BVAL boys basketball — Deer Valley at De La Salle, Liberty at Freedom, Ygnacio Valley at Pittsburg, Clayton Valley at Antioch, 7 p.m.

BVAL girls basketball — Carondelet at Deer Valley, Freedom at Liberty, Pittsburg at Ygnacio Valley, Antioch at Clayton Valley, 7 p.m.

DFAL boys basketball — Campolindo at Miramonte, Dublin at Alhambra, Acalanes at Northgate, Mt. Diablo at College Park, Las Lomas at Concord, 7 p.m.

DFAL girls basketball — Campolindo at Miramonte, Dublin at Alhambra, Acalanes at Northgate, Mt. Diablo at College Park, Las Lomas at Concord, 5:30 p.m.

EBAL boys basketball — Monte Vista at San Ramon Valley, California at Livermore, Foothill at Amador Valley, 7 p.m.

EBAL girls basketball — San Ramon Valley at Monte Vista, Livermore at California, Amador Valley at Foothill, 7 p.m.

Prep wrestling — NCS championships, at Newark Memorial HS, 10 a.m.

Saturday, Feb. 25

JC baseball — Diablo Valley at Ohlone, 1 p.m.; Los Medanos at Skyline Tournament, Skyline, TBA

JC men's basketball — State tournament, 1st round, TBA

JC women's basketball — Nor Cal playoffs 1st round, TBA

JC softball — College of the Redwoods at Diablo Valley, 10 a.m.; San Jose City at Diablo Valley, 2 p.m.

BCL boys basketball — BCL-East finals, at Bentley, 8 p.m.

BCL girls basketball — BCL-East finals, at Bentley, 6:30 p.m.

BSAL boys basketball — League playoffs, at Albany, 8 p.m.

BSAL girls basketball — League playoffs, at Albany, 5 p.m.

Prep boys soccer — NCS championships, TBA

Prep girls soccer — NCS championships, TBA

Prep wrestling — NCS championships, at Newark Memorial HS, 10 a.m.; SJS championships, Stockton, TBA

Prep girls wrestling — NCS championships, at Freedom HS, 10 a.m.

Richmond

FROM PAGE 1

Veni, veni, canta con migo que un amigo vas a encontrar, que con la mano de Juan, toda la vuelta vamos adar.

(Come and sing with me, a friend you will find, because with the help of Juan, everything will turn out fine.)

When the Oilers take the field Saturday in the North Coast Section 3A playoffs, they do so as the No. 1 seed for the third straight season.

Their reputation on the field allow Siles to schedule matches with De La Salle and teams from the East Bay Athletic League, schools known for their deep pockets and links to talent from well-funded club teams.

The Oilers, who have won 11 Alameda Contra Costa Athletic League titles and one NCS championship, have established themselves as one of Northern California's best teams. Richmond has won the ACCAL title the past three seasons.

So the question arises: How do the Oilers do it?

"I think it's because as a group we all love soccer, that's what keeps us together," senior midfielder Carlos Venegas said. "Soccer is within us. It doesn't matter if we don't have a good field or struggle financially, but soccer is what we like to do, it's what we do and that's how we beat teams like De La Salle. ... rich schools, private schools."

Financial need

Siles and his players arrived on the first day of practice to find that two stolen cars had been driven through a gate and onto the Richmond High field. Donuts and tire tracks were left everywhere on the already uneven, muddy surface.

The players didn't let it dampen their spirits. Perhaps the biggest trip in the history of the program — to the heralded West Coast Classic in Irvine — was on the horizon.

The only question was how the Oilers would afford it. The coaches paid a \$400 registration fee for the tournament without knowing how they would afford the transportation and housing costs.

"We don't do it for the money, right?" Siles said.

Then the community responded.

Donations from private businesses and community organizations began to pour in. The Seville Group (a construction

"I think it's because as a group we all love soccer, that's what keeps us together. Soccer is within us."

— Richmond's Carlos Venegas

company) and the North East Neighborhood Council in Richmond led the way. The money was raised, and the trip was on.

Janet Ceja-Orosco, whose son Victor graduated last year, is the team's manager, but she does much more than just purchase uniforms and equipment and rent buses for travel. She often opens her own pocketbook.

"Basically I rent (the buses) on my credit card and then we try to pay it back, which is not a smart thing to do, but it's the only way we can do it," Ceja-Orosco said.

New place, dreams

Ramiro Martinez, a senior who leads the Oilers in scoring, had doubts when he first joined the team.

"When I got here, I wanted to go back. I felt uncomfortable," said Martinez, who arrived from Michoacan, Mexico, when he was 15. "Now it's nice. That's what helped me. I didn't have any friends, and I met a lot of people and it helped me."

The Oilers represent much more than a soccer team to Martinez. Three years ago, the soccer program was his bridge to the United States.

"I didn't want to enter school because I didn't have any friends," Martinez said in Spanish. "My sister (Liensy) knew I liked to play soccer, so she brought me to the team. I started playing. When I found soccer, I haven't thought about going home."

It's a familiar story. Nearly half of Richmond's players come from Mexico, Central America and South America.

"Soccer is something that they know," Siles said. "It gives them a sense of direction. It's a way to make friends. It's a way to feel safe. What we're trying to do at Richmond High is to use that to direct them toward education."

Venegas, who arrived as an 11-year-old from Mexicali, now speaks fluent English. He helped Martinez write an essay so he could make his grades and stay on the field.

"We all support each other," said Venegas, who hopes to attend college. "I want to get a de-

gree. That's my goal."

Martinez wants to play in college as well. Few players from Richmond have done so over the years. Siles, with the help of Danville resident Brad Blake, hopes to make it happen more often.

College is real

"It all started last spring," said Blake, an assistant coach for Monte Vista High's junior varsity girls soccer team. "I thought it was a pretty inspiring story."

Monte Vista defeated Richmond 2-1 in an NCS playoff game in 2005. But even in their dejection, the Oilers showed the sportsmanship for which they have become known.

As the Mustangs left the field to board their bus, Richmond fans and players gave Monte Vista a standing ovation. Then-Mustangs coach Fred Wilson said it was one of the most inspiring things he had ever seen.

Word got around, and Blake knew he had to do something to help.

He started "College is Real" for Richmond's boys and girls soccer teams. The program encourages youngsters to aim high.

Blake's donation funded a teacher on campus to monitor grades and paid for trips to Cal, Stanford, USF and UC Davis.

"I decided this fall to use my resources and relationships to help the kids on the academic side of things," said Blake, CEO of a real estate development and investment company. "It was nice to see if we could create a boost on the academic side and create opportunities for them."

Pride in Richmond

Flores, 28, a member of Richmond's lone NCS championship team in 1994, knows what the Oilers represent.

"First, in order to defend something, you have to be proud of it," Flores said. "We represent not just the team, but the school, the city. I told them what's happening, that we're in the No. 1 crime city. But we can change that. We can put Richmond in the news for something positive."

Flores asked his players in January to list 10 reasons why they wanted to win the NCS championship.

"For my family," one said. "For the people who don't believe in us. (And) for the people who do believe in us," another wrote.

"It's pride" Flores said. Then he pointed to an answer that made him smile.

"For the community," it read. "For Richmond."

Villanueva d. A Smith, 6-1, a d. Grace, 6-0, 6-0; Que d. l. 6-2; Johnson d. Piatravets abot by forfeit. Doubles: Villanueva d. A Smith/V Smith 6-2, ario d. Grace/Piatravets 6-0, y forfeit. Record: Diablo Val-

School boys

ry-Santa Rosa 8,

Donor Olson (M) d. William ; Chris Eriksson (M) d. Jared 6-0; Neal Adler (M) d. Bob 2; Sean Morales (M) d. Cory i-3, 6-0; Sean Fitzgerald (M) nson 6-0, 6-0; Stewart Hur- y Burgess 6-0, 6-0. Doubles: r/Bineeth Pillai (M) d. Andrew arr 6-4, 6-1; Spencer r Uyebara (M) d. Tyler Jor- Lozano 6-2, 6-0; Scott Hopkins (F) d. Anthony oder 2-6, 6-2 (5). Records: Montgomery 1-0.

alendar

Today
— Diablo Valley at Contra

asketball — Berean Christ- 7 p.m.
basketball — Northgate at hambra at Acalanes, 7 p.m.
basketball — Northgate at hambra at Acalanes, College mas, 5:30 p.m.
asketball — Bethel at Bent-

Friday
s basketball — Cosumnes Valley, 8 p.m.
y's basketball — Cosumnes Valley, 6 p.m.
asketball — Los Medanos 7:30 p.m.
e's basketball — Los endocino, Contra Costa at n.
l — Los Medanos, Diablo ri-Valley Classic, Los o Valley, TBA
i basketball — Encinal at .p.m.; Richmond at Berke- at Hercules, De Anza at 1.

asketball — Berkeley at ules at El Cerrito, Pinole al, Alameda at De Anza, 7

asketball — California eaf at Contra Costa Chris- ianese Christian at Bentley,

asketball — Contra Costa omia School for the Deaf, an at Bentley, 5:30 p.m.; n Christian, 7 p.m.

asketball — Kennedy at Elizabeth at Albany, 7 p.m.; admont, 8 p.m.

asketball — St. Mary's at 0 p.m.; John Swett at ian at St. Joseph Notre : St. Patrick-St. Vincent, St. Names, 7 p.m.

og — League tournament ool for the Deaf, Fremont,

asketball — Liberty at Deer ile at Antioch, Freedom at

asketball — Deer Valley at t Carondelet, Pittsburg at

asketball — Dublin at Mid- rd at Mt. Diablo, College as, 7 p.m.

asketball — Dublin at Mid- rd at Mt. Diablo, 5:30 p.m.

asketball — Livermore at Foothill at Monte Vista, rnia, 7 p.m.

asketball — Amador Val- . Monte Vista at Foothill, iada, 7 p.m.

asketball — Moreau at p.m.

asketball — The Kings y Christian, 6:30 p.m.
asketball — Benicia at

— Northwest Sub Sec-

Saturday
— Los Medanos, Diablo -Valley Classic, Log. Valley, TBA
— Diablo Valley at College ournament, Visalia, TBA
asketball — St. Joseph