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LMSC Players Make U.S. National Team Training Programs

By Emily Dugdale



Cecilia "Ceci" Gee Photo Gint Federas

Two Lamorinda Soccer Club (LMSC) players were invited to train with the youth U.S. National Teams in December. Forwards Cecilia "Ceci" Gee, 17, and Adrian Guzman, 13, were called into training programs for the U18 and U14 teams, respectively, a "huge honor" according to LMSC head coach and director Mohamed Mohamed.

"You could see from the early years how those two have put so much dedication into the game," Mohamed said. "Their work ethic is unbelievable - it's not easy for the young players to give up a lot of their social life."

Gee, a tall, humble senior at Miramonte, chose early on to forgo the traditional aquatic sports that dominate the region. "When I started playing competitive for [LMSC] I realized how much I love playing soccer," she said. "I've dedicated a lot of

time to the sport - just staying that extra hour after practice and working hard."

Gee's mother, Carmen Ancinas-Gee, says that while they're a "tennis family," they've supported Ceci's growth as she makes waves in the elite soccer culture. "Ceci is unique because she dedicated a lot of time to this without anyone telling her," she said. "It was the perfect sport for her."

"Her feeling for the team and appreciation for the game is outstanding," Mohamed said.

Gee was invited to train with the U.S. Women's National Team training camp last month in Chula Vista, California - the sole Lamorinda-area player. The camps are monthly, and attempt to cut quickly through the large recruiting pool for the coveted few spots on the national teams. "I thought the soccer was amazing, intensity wise," Gee said. "It was a really fun experience, especially being exposed to the different coaching styles."

Guzman was brought on for an Olympic Development Program (ODP) - a feeder program for U.S. National Team programs - in Casa Grande, Arizona last month. The talented player musters a daily commute up to LMSC's training sessions in Moraga from his family home in Richmond.

"Soccer was his number one sport from day one," Mohamed said of Guzman. "His attitude and respect for the game is very unique."

Despite not growing up in the Lamorinda area, Guzman has thrived in the competitive soccer culture at LMSC, easily rising to the top of his peers. At just 13, he manages to capture the attention of any audience when he strides onto the soccer pitch. "He was just able to gel instantly with the team," Mohamed said.

Most impressive is that both Gee and Guzman were able to make the highly competitive national training camps without being connected to the traditional recruiting outlets. Due to their small size, LMSC does not usually send players to ODPs, and the club also doesn't participate in major national leagues such as the girl's Elite Clubs National League (ECNL).

"Every single girl at the training camp was on (ECNL) except for me," Gee said proudly. "It was really exciting."

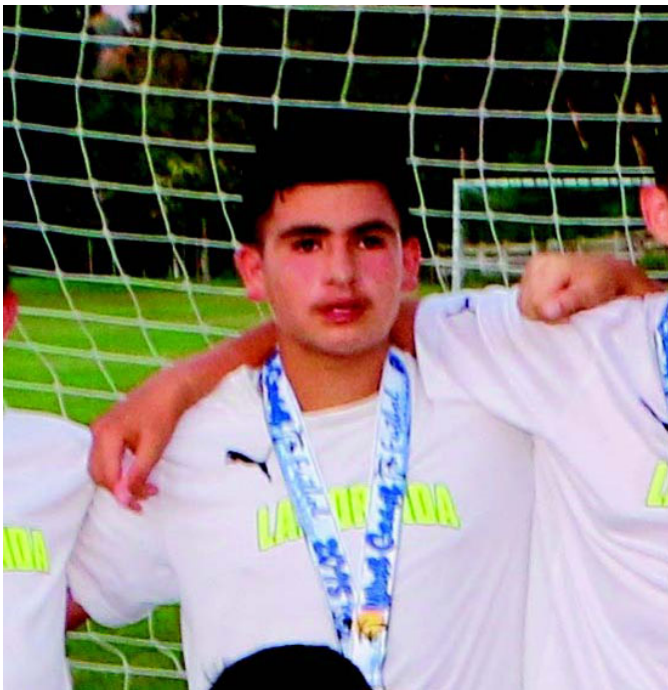
According to Mohamed, the key to Guzman's and Gee's success lies in the "possession-style" soccer championed by both the national teams. The play relies less on physical strength and more on tactical, intelligent play, according to Gee.

"You don't rely on a few players, or opportunistic opportunities where you rely on your opponent to make mistakes," Mohamed said. "Instead, all of our players are engaged. It's the style of play that the college recruiters recognize about our teams."

While the younger Guzman is just starting to receive college scout attention, Gee has already verbally committed to Stanford in 2017. The prestigious university boasts several players on the U. S. National Teams - a learning opportunity like no other for Gee.

"I've watched a bunch of their games and the players on the teams, so I'm super excited," she said, adding that they also play the "possession-style" game that she is accustomed to at LMSC.

For now, both Guzman and Gee will continue to train and await the phone call that signals their return to the national training pitch. "They're the kind of players that any coach would love to have on their teams," Mohamed said.



Adrian Guzman Photo provided



Cecilia Gee Photo provided

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