



Luke Finley



Miguel Andrade

AMAZING KIDS

Donosti Cup Invites Young Players To Spain

BY AGENT ERIN HOLDEN

LUKE FINLEY

According to Luke Finley's mom, soccer has been a part of his life since the day he was born. Now, at nine years old, he is getting to play in the Donosti Cup in Spain this July. "He has had one consistent passion since he learned to walk – kicking a soccer ball!" said Leslie Finley. "Luke received his first soccer ball before he even left Women's and Children's Hospital after he was born."

Like many other young soccer players, Luke attended a soccer camp in Austin that is an affiliate of FC Barcelona. Of the 5,000 kids at these camps, only 40 were selected. "I started screaming and running!" Luke said, describing the moment that he heard the news. "I'm excited because I get to represent my home country, the USA."

Luke, who is a big Chelsea fan, has played soccer since he was three years old. He was in the Turf Tykes league and is currently in the Dynamo Juniors Grey 07 team. His favorite player of all time is Leo Messi. Luke plans to pursue soccer professionally one day and is starting Spanish lessons to prepare for his trip.

Soccer is in Luke's blood, as his father, Brandon, played semi-pro in Jackson. He describes what the event might be like while Luke is there. "The whole northern area of Spain becomes like an Olympic village," said Brandon, "and it is quite a different experience for a soccer player and fan to be in a part of the world where soccer plays such a huge role."

"We are beyond thrilled," said Leslie. "It all started with Luke using his birthday money to go to Austin. It's certainly not something you plan for, but it is a once in a lifetime opportunity. We're extremely proud. He'll get to experience a different culture and play with players from all over the world."

MIGUEL ANDRADE

Miguel Andrade has played soccer since he was four years old. Now, at age 12, he has earned the incredible opportunity of playing in the 2018 Donosti Cup in Spain this July. Miguel's mom, Natalia, remembers her excitement when she first learned that Miguel had been chosen.

"I felt incredibly proud, but incredibly emotional because of the passion he shows," she said. "He and his brother did the camp, and the coaches and officials let them know that some would be chosen, but not to be discouraged if they weren't. Miguel asked me if it would be okay to pray for that, and I said absolutely. That's the first thing I thought of when I got the invitation. He was excited. It was a special moment."

Miguel sees himself pursuing his passion of playing soccer not only in high school and college, but also professionally. Getting to play in Spain will be an experience he will never forget. "I was very excited. At the same time, I couldn't believe it," he said, describing the moment he heard the news. He has never traveled outside of the country before. He imagines that he will see beautiful beaches and try the local cuisine, and he is "looking forward to training in quality facilities."

Miguel has worked hard to get to this point. Though he lives with Crohn's disease, he never lets anything hold him back from achieving his goals. His mom described him as a "humble person" who feels that he has a lot of work to do to prepare himself "both physically and mentally" for this event. She said that "he is becoming more confident with his training, and he is going to be well-prepared."

Fortunately, Miguel gets to share this milestone with his dad, who will be traveling with him to Spain. "My dad and I share a love for soccer," explained Miguel. "I feel like he is my biggest inspiration, and I am glad to get to share this experience with him."