Central Islip Boys Soccer

 In the midst of Central Islip’s dust cloud filled soccer fields, emerged greatness. The field was lined from end to end with teachers, administrators, students, parents and alumni all ready to witness history. Unity? Pride? Admiration? What drew people to the grassless field on those bitter afternoons?

Since 1967 Central Islip boys’ varsity soccer was on the hunt for a second county title. On November 7, 2013 that title was found. Central Islip and Smithtown West are co-county champions.

The boys were led by head coach, Johnny Velez and assistant coach, Paul Venturi. Both are teachers here at Central Islip High School. These coaches take care of their players on and off the field. Captains, Carlos Iparraguirre and Junior Cordero, seniors, are leaders of the team. These four people are shown a tremendous amount of respect by every player.

 This is the first year that this core group of players has played together. Playing in a traditional formation of 4-4-2, the boys made Central Islip history. CI’s back four, along with goalie Rene Melgar, only allowed thirteen goals all season including the post season with a total of one hundred and twenty-one saves. Sophomore, Christian Villalta led the team in scoring with twenty-two goals and ranked second on Long Island for highest scoring player. Their outstanding play during the season led to an epic battle against Smithtown West.

 Prior to that memorable night at Dowling College, CI had to make it through three rounds of playoffs. Rene Melgar kept a clean sheet as Central Islip beat Newfield 4-0 at home.

They were granted home advantage again for round two against Sachem North. These two teams met earlier in the regular season. Both games were close, with intense play, and ended in a CI victory.

In the opening minutes of the Sachem North playoff game, Carlos Iparraguirre took a corner kick that met Osman Portillo’s head to give CI an early lead. Sachem did not make it easy for Central Islip and tied the game at half forcing overtime. Christian Villalta took a pass from midfield and kept a step in front of the defender who closely guarded him. The goalie came out to defend his goal, but Christian beat the keeper on his left side with a low shot that found the back of the net. That goal advanced the team to the semifinals against Huntington.

An intense and close semifinal was predicted between these two teams. Keepers on both ends of the pitch made unbelievable saves keeping both teams in the game. Finding themselves in overtime once again, sophomore Jorge Magna was fouled in Huntington’s defensive end. Attempting to play it quick and catch Huntington off guard he played the ball to Carlos Iparraguirre who was then fouled right outside of the penalty area. Coach Velez put his faith into left back, Misael Rosa. He curved the ball around the large Sachem wall into the bottom left corner beating the goalie with a tiny bounce pushing CI to the finals

 November 7, 2013, Central Islip met undefeated, Smithtown West at Dowling College. Fans from both sides packed the stands as the two teams prepared for an intense ninety minutes. As the game progressed, both teams were anxious to score and tried anything and everything to get the go ahead goal. The game came to an end after double overtime with a tied score, 0-0; forcing both teams to share the county title.

To decide which team would advance to the Long Island Championship, dreaded penalty kicks were necessary. Smithtown West defeated Central Islip and faced Massapequa in the Long Island Championship resulting in a disappointing loss for the co-county champion.

Over the years, one of Central Islip’s biggest problems was playing as a team, but this season they did. Coming together in the summer league a group of talented individuals played as one. The boys kept teams on their toes with the opposition unaware if they would have to defend a quick give and go or be taken on by quick feet.

 Central Islip’s quick feet resulted in quick play with “one – two touch” soccer. They were deadliest on counter attacks. Quickly defending with numbers behind the ball, they would rapidly strike back at their opponents with a play up the field moving up as a unit.

 Center midfielders, Aldair Chirino and Marcos Melgar, both juniors are good friends off the field and are quite the tricksters. In the game they use their tricks and vision of the field to give Central Islip great offensive chances.

In a defensive line, communication is everything. So how did the defensive line communicate with saying very little? For Richard Campos, Misael Rosa, and Asley Reneau a common language of Spanish was frequently used, leaving stopper Robenson Jasmine out of the conversation. This language barrier was no issue for the two center backs, Asley and Robenson for they merely communicated by hand gestures and seeing where the other one was adjusting accordingly. A chemistry that usually takes years to develop for teams, they did within months.

 Captain Carlos Iparraguirre, commonly known as “Ippa” prepared his team for this season with frequent captain’s practices. Co-captain Junior Cordero helped insure the players would be there by sending out messages to every player, as well as voicing his opinion on what drills they should run and stepping up when Carlos was absent.

Carlos expressed his feelings towards the team and the past season. “I am happy to be a part of this team and make it to finals. I am so proud,” he said. He believes this is one of the best teams CI has ever seen.

 In the semifinal against Huntington Coach Velez began to see doubt in his players’ eyes at half. His half time speech along with motivation from their captains pushed them to work harder and ultimately win. Carlos says that was his most memorable moment.

Coach Velez became the head coach two years ago after being the assistant coach for many years. He begins recruiting young for his varsity team by visiting the middle schools finding potential and watching them progress.

In order to play any sport in school the player must meet academic requirements. Coach Velez makes sure these requirements are met.

His worry during the end of the season leading into post season was the players’ egos. It’s normal for successful teams to be over-confident and slack off at practice. The coaches constantly pushed the boys at practice to keep them humble.

 Whether it was to watch Robenson glide through defenders with effortless skill or Jorge and Christian using their incredible speed to beat defenders, people were there. Filled with pride and respect for the boys, the cold fingers and toes were a small price to pay to support Central Islip’s stars.

Central Islip boys’ varsity soccer was more than a team. They were a family. The love they have for one another on and off the field is a bond that will never die.

Award Winners for 2013:

1. Coach Velez awarded- League II Coach of the Year

2. Robenson Jasmin awarded- 2013 League II All-Conference, 2013 All-County, 2013 NSCAA All-State, 2013 NSCAA All-Region, 2013 SCSCA Large School Bob Kersch Player of the Year, 2013 Newsday's All-Long Island 1st Team

3. Asley Reneau awarded- 2013 League II All-Conference, 2013 All-County

4. Christian Villalta awarded- 2013 League II All-Conference, 2013 All-County, 2013 Newsday's All-Long Island 2nd Team

5. Carlos Iparraguirre awarded- 2013 League II All-Conference, 2013 SCSCA All-Star Senior Award

6. Rene Melgar awarded- 2013 League II All- League, 2013 "John Ruffini" Goalkeeper Award for 10 Single season shutouts, 2013 SCSCA All-Star Senior Award

7. Misael Rosa awarded- 2013 League II All- League

8. Fabricio Pizarro awarded - 2013 "America's Future Prospects" Academic All-County Team

9. Junior Cordero awarded- NSCAA Senior Excellence Award

Seniors:

1. Carlos Iparraguirre- Captain
2. Junior Cordero- Captain
3. Rene Melgar
4. Osman Portillo
5. Richard Campos
6. Fabricio Pizarro
7. Kelvin Rivera
8. Max Alicea
9. Mario Mejia
10. Julio Novoa-Quintanilla
11. Eric Raymundo
12. Jose Ramos
13. Elixon Labonte