



The Athlete, The Academic and The Artist

Paramount is a city of many facets with a rich history told in the lives of countless people. This month we highlight some of Paramount's brightest young stars who have excelled in the diverse areas of academics, sports and the arts.

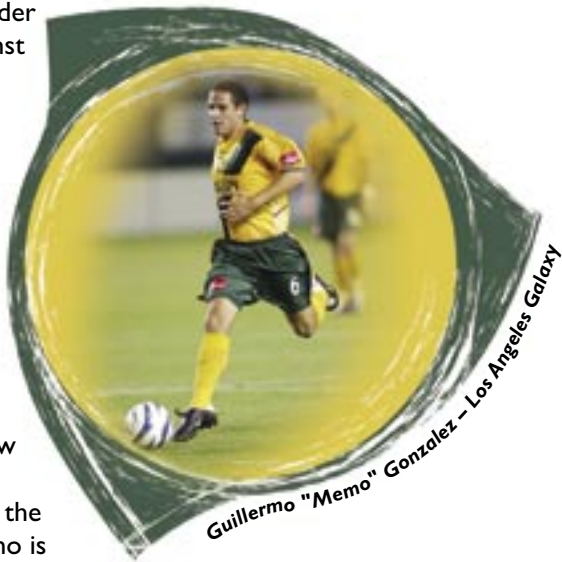
A Soccer Star on the Rise

Guillermo Gonzalez, known by his nickname "Memo," is a Paramount kid who has, at the age of 17, already made remarkable strides in the world of sports. Earlier this year, he became one of the youngest players in professional soccer when the Los Angeles Galaxy picked him in the first round of the major league draft. The 5' 11", 145-pound midfielder made his pro debut on June 21 against the New York Metro Stars.

A former student at Our Lady of the Rosary School, Memo was a soccer whiz from early on, and joined the United States Under 17 National Team in Florida when he was 15. This summer, he played at the Youth Soccer World Championships in Finland where he helped the United States gain a 5th-place finish before returning to join his Galaxy teammates at the new Home Depot Stadium.

Not only is he a gifted athlete on the verge of a standout career, but Memo is also an inspiration to his hometown. The City of Paramount is working with him to create "Memo's Kids," a program that will give underprivileged youth great seats and the VIP treatment – with gifts and autographs – at Galaxy games. Paramount's GRIP program will help identify participants for the program and the City will provide transportation.

Congratulations to Memo on a big year, and a rousing cheer for "Memo's Kids."



Guillermo "Memo" Gonzalez – Los Angeles Galaxy

A Champ at Cambridge

In the world of academics there are few universities that can match the luster of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). While many hope to get in, only a fraction ever make it. One of those who did was Felix Rivera, Paramount High School Class of 1998. (He was one of 1,800 admitted from more than 8,000 applicants that year.)

Although other prestigious colleges like Johns Hopkins and Cornell also courted the math whiz (he scored 790 out of a possible 800 on his SAT in the subject), MIT had been Felix's higher education destination of choice since his days at Alondra Middle School.

When he was accepted to MIT, Felix shouted his excitement about the dream come true. When he arrived on the Cambridge, MA, campus, however, the reality of a new world hit home. "It was a big shock, both academically and socially," Felix related. "The school work was insanely hard. It was crazy, but in a good way."

Rivera had always worked hard in school. Now, faced with a huge challenge, he dove in completely. "When you get there it's so tough you don't know how to deal with it," he said. "But when you get the hang of it you figure you might as well do as much as possible." That meant, for Felix, pursuing two degrees, and last June he completed his bachelor of science in both civil engineering and architecture. (He averaged between 48 and 54 units per semester.)



Felix Rivera receiving his bachelor of science degrees in civil engineering and architecture.

Besides the workload, there were adjustments to the East Coast/West Coast differences. "Some were obvious, like the tightly cramped lay out of the towns," Felix said. "Some were subtle attitude differences. When you walk down the street in Paramount people will smile at you, even say hi. That doesn't happen in Boston. And when people give directions they always use landmarks instead of street names, because the streets are a mess."

And then there's the weather. "By October I was already wearing all my winter clothes. Everybody laughed at me."

But it's hard to laugh at the accomplishments of this Paramount scholar. Felix – who is currently testing the waters in the Boston area for an engineering position – has represented his hometown superbly at one of the nation's premiere universities.

Artistry and Science

The scientific field of biology delves into the physicality of cells and tissues, how they work and what they're made of. In the realm of the artist, the fixation is on the mind's eye and the expression of ideas, forms and emotions. It's rare that these two worlds mix, especially within one person. But Paramount native Nuvia Crisol Guerra is that exception, biochemist by day, painter by night.

The UC San Diego graduate was always intrigued by science. At Paramount High School she was in the Upward Bound program that lets students take part in special projects during the summer through state universities. "My senior year I got into molecular biology and fell in love with it," she recalled.

It was in her college senior year that Nuvia's interest in art was reawakened. What started as a single elective class turned into a minor degree in studio art. "Art had always been easy for me – but I never thought much about it. Then I ended up getting a lot of encouragement from my professors."

Now her life is split between a quest for scientific knowledge and the challenge of making the visions in her head come to life on canvas. At the pharmaceutical company that employs her in a career she loves, Nuvia studies cell receptors in the human heart in hopes of producing better drugs with fewer side effects. But her sketch book is always at her side. And as the paintings – often inspired by Mexican "Day of the Dead" imagery – have multiplied, the artist has found an audience, appearing in group shows at galleries



"Cuidadora Ancestral II"



Nuvia Crisol Guerra

and coffeehouses. Her work has been shown in San Francisco and she has contributed to a mural in Lima, Peru. In April her one-woman show, La Loteria de la Mujer, was exhibited in San Diego.

"Science has helped me in my art in that you have to do many experiments to get the result you want," Nuvia said. "Using that mentality, I work on sketches and change colors and put different things together. It takes a lot of patience and persistence. But it's always cool when people start smiling when they see my work."

Her background and education, forged in her hometown, have combined to shape Nuvia Crisol Guerra's outlook on life and art. "I aspire to use my artwork as a creative tool to broaden the understanding of Mexican culture, its people and its traditions to non-Latinos and Latinos alike," she stated. "My intention is to evoke feelings of a need of family history, inspiring a better sense of life."