

## Sports



Submitted photos by Mike Herman

Jesus Moreno (right), who plays soccer with Compton United Soccer club, powers forward during a 2007 game. Moreno has been focusing on getting to college, but he's already doing something with his life on the soccer field.

# Young soccer star tending big goals

## Jesus Moreno finds his leadership skills flourishing in Compton United Soccer Club

By Dennis J. Freeman  
Bulletin Staff Writer

COMPTON—The light has finally come on for Dominguez High School senior and Compton United Soccer Club star Jesus Moreno.

He had seen a brother and sister go off to college. No big deal. It never really registered to him just how important getting a higher education degree is. Going to college simply wasn't on his to-do list.

Then Moreno began to assess his surroundings. People he knows are more about getting into the vices of street life. He's witnessed gang shootings. In his apartment building, Moreno has seen people die right before his very eyes.

Merely going to the store to buy groceries can be a walk through a seemingly alternate reality of illicit activities in this young man's neighborhood. Drugs sales and other criminal activities are a daily a way of life.

Experiencing this type of dead-end existence hasn't just propelled Moreno to think seriously about his future — it has elevated his thought process to focus on college.

Joining the Compton United Soccer Club (CUSC) probably saved his life in more ways than one. Not only has playing soccer kept him off the streets, but it also has helped redirect his energy



Compton United Soccer Club member Jesus Moreno (right) is shown here with Los Angeles Galaxy player Julian Valentin at Compton United's 2008 College Night event.

toward more positive pursuits.

"It (soccer) has helped me a lot," Moreno said. "Before, I wouldn't have thought about stuff like this. When I joined Compton United soccer team, it has helped me. Had I not done that I probably would have been doing

something else.

"Maybe I would have gotten into gangs. It has totally helped me get off the streets," he continued. "I want to do something for my community. Now I just want to go to college and do something with my life."

But Moreno is already doing something with his life, Compton United Coach Mike Herman said.

Moreno has been with the club for several years. A defensive stalwart, he receives kudos for his leadership skills both on and off the field. He has devel-

oped into a to-notch leader on the CUSC team.

Growing up and living in a blighted neighborhood where drugs, gangs and misery are king, Moreno wants to see that atmosphere changed. He wants to change things; he wants to see more safety in neighborhoods.

The youth hopes to pursue a career of law enforcement or some other avenue that would position him to work with those living in urban communities.

Currently, he's gearing up to to showcase his talent when the club hosts the CUSC Urban Soccer Leadership Academy at Compton Center in June.

That honor follows Moreno's trip to Philadelphia to participate in a leadership academy. Moreno was one of three players from the area selected to participate.

Herman said Moreno's unselfishness and willingness to work hard will pay off.

"He's going to go places," Herman said. "He's an incredible soccer player. He's got a shot. He's got a shot of getting into college, getting into law enforcement to help the fathers, brothers and sons be all they can be in their neighborhoods."

"They (youth) have a negative example sometimes, but this is what comes out of Compton," Herman said, motioning to Moreno. "Take a picture and frame the face."

# Reviving baseball at Compton High

## Team struggles for now as Tarbabe baseball program is resurrected

By Dennis J. Freeman  
Bulletin Staff Writer

COMPTON—Compton High School's baseball coach was looking forward to seeing how his team would match up against traditional baseball power, Lakewood High School.

Last Wednesday, April 1 at Major League Baseball's Urban Youth Academy, Brian Reed got his answer with an emphatic punctuation mark. Lakewood jumped on Compton pitcher Daniel Gutierrez for six runs in the first inning, en route to posting a 20-0 win over the Tarbabe in Moore League play.

Pounding out 17 hits in the game, Lakewood scored two runs in the third and three more in the fourth before blowing the game open with a nine-run fifth inning.

The defeat was Compton's ninth this season. The team stands without a win. Two days later, on Friday, April 3, the Tarbabe lost their 10th game

of the year to Millikan, 18-0.

It certainly hasn't been a bed of roses for the Compton High baseball team thus far this season.

Prior to going into the contest against Lakewood, one of the top baseball programs in Southern California, Reed told The Bulletin that he felt playing the Lancers would be a true measuring stick on just how far his team has come.

"I would give us a C-minus," Reed said. "Defensively, we played a stellar game."

The Lakewood and Millikan blowouts notwithstanding, Reed sees the progress of his team differently than does the average onlooker. He sees improvement. He sees desire. He sees commitment.

These attributes were lacking from players when he took over the program more than a year ago. But there wasn't really much to take over, Reed said. The baseball team had pretty much become an afterthought to the student body and

school officials, he said.

Getting money for team uniforms proved to be a challenge. Recruiting student-athletes on campus to try out for the team soon turned into a chore. Some of the students who finally did come out either had disciplinary issues or had limited knowledge about how to play the sport.

Compounding Reed's frustration in trying to revive the school's baseball program was the playing field. It was a river of potholes, water runoffs, muck and shoddy soil, he said.

"When I got here, it was a mess," Reed said. "It was a gopher farm. There was no grass. In order to get players, I had to make the field playable. It was a lake in right field." Reed soon got the field up to par. Now he's busy doing what coaches typically do: build their programs.

Reed thinks he's tapped into something great even though he has only two real pitchers, suits up only about a dozen or so players and

struggles with feeding confidence and getting the players to buy into his system.

"Last year, I had to take what was there, and that wasn't a whole lot," Reed said. "I'm a new coach trying to coach in a program that hasn't been coached. I had so many defections that coming into January I didn't even know I would have a team. It was that difficult."

Reed got the break he needed to get on track when a student-athlete approached him and told him he would go around the campus and round up potential players. One by one, they began to trickle in.

"I'm dealing with players who haven't played more than two years," Reed said. "My kids just don't know how to win, yet. The defense is very nice. The infield is very nice. The outfield is the best we've had."

"We have everything, except we're lacking in experience and we're lacking the pitching. I finally have a program. We still look like the Bad News

Bears, but we know what the future is because they're playing baseball."

Several of Reed's players — Jovan Bronson and Marcel Dunn — have already gotten looks from Major League Baseball scouts.

The future is, however, remains iffy. Like rest of the school districts surrounding it, Compton Unified is beset with budgetary problems, which could pose a threat to the future of the baseball program at Compton High.

Even though he was able to get the school to muster \$4,000 to help fund the program, Reed knows that when the budget ax falls, it will likely fall on the programs that are not considered most valued in the context of educational need.

"Everything is on the chopping block," Reed said. "The baseball program was nonexistent. When you get rid of something, you get rid of the least populated program. Baseball is not the kind of sport to generate funds."