

OUR FIRST TRIP

The Carter Baron Trip

Everything I have achieved in football is due to playing on the streets with my friends.

ZINEDINE ZIDANE

Like every immigrant community across the USA, and the world, there was soccer talent in abundance, and Ronald's soccer program was no exception. One kid in particular was Junior Perdomo, a skinny, nine year old, who learned how to play futbol on the streets of Honduras, just like Andy Najar of DC United.

Every day he would play futbol. Some days he would skip school and just play soccer. His poise and confidence on the ball was mind boggling. His vision for the game was second to none, and his skill was unbelievable. They say in soccer you can spot a "baller" within five minutes, well with him it only took three or four touches, a feint, and an upper body movement to convince me. He was such a joy to watch.

Along with Junior, William Alvarez (some twelve years later, his two children, Alexander and Anthony, would play for our organization), Freddy Calderon, Cristoból Fuentes, Randy Crawford, and Otto Calderon and several others formed our first travel team that played at Carter Baron in Washington, D.C. For me, this was the beginning of my journey into the Latino community. I did not know that this would be a journey that would shape me for the rest of my life.



Organizing the team was the easy part. Convincing the parents to allow their child to play in D.C. was another story. This meant going to each player's apartment and sitting down with parents, using their child as a translator. As uncomfortable as it was, it quickly made me realize the power of soccer. That soccer is a universal language that transcends racial barriers. Apartment by apartment, I was able to convince thirteen parents to entrust their children to me every Wednesday and Friday for practice, and games on Saturdays in D.C.

I remember having to make two trips to Washington D.C. to ensure that these teenagers had a chance to play. Luckily back then gas prices' were not that high nor was eating at McDonald's. I do not recall our record during the season, but I do remember the look on the faces every time we left the community to play. A look of joy and happiness appeared, the opportunity to leave the community to have fun, if only for a couple of hours.