



The Little Acorn



The Official Newsletter of the
VSD Alumni Association

Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind
P.O. Box 2069, Staunton, VA 24402

May 1, 2022

Volume 20, Issue 2

Deaf Football Players Forge a Path to the Super Bowl (edited)

After a record-breaking season, four players from the California School for the Deaf, Riverside, were invited to Sunday's game as honorary captains.

By Thomas Fuller, *NY Times* writer, Feb 10, 2022



Football players for the California School for the Deaf, Riverside, during a halftime break last season. Photo Credit...Adam Perez for *The New York Times*

Minutes before the Super Bowl got underway on Sunday, four high school students from Riverside were standing on the field in the glare of the national spotlight.

The National Football League, which invited them to take part in the coin toss, called the teenagers "honorary captains."

Trevin Adams, Christian Jimenez, Jory Valencia and Enos Zornoza were representing their teammates from the California School for the Deaf, Riverside, after a remarkable and record-breaking season. They wore their Cubs uniforms.

"I don't think I ever thought I would go to the Super Bowl," Christian, an offensive lineman, said on Wednesday. "My parents have never had that experience. I'm 16 years old and I'm doing the coin

toss. I don't think anything is ever going to replace this."

The boys, chosen because they were the captains of their team, were part of a wider group of people witnessing the coin toss that Samantha Roth, an N.F.L. spokeswoman, called an effort to focus on inclusion. The other participants will be announced on Friday, she said.

Early in the Super Bowl era, the coin toss was done by the referee; then football legends like Red Grange and Bart Starr were asked to participate. During some years the National Football League (NFL) cast a wider net, inviting politicians and military veterans. Ronald Reagan flipped a coin remotely from the White House for Super Bowl XIX, which was held in the Bay Area. And last year the NFL invited an intensive care nurse to do the honors.

Roth said the NFL invited the deaf players this year because "they were defying stereotypes." Two deaf artists took part in the halftime show.

For the players from Riverside, the journey from their parched and rutted field to the manicured turf at SoFi Stadium on Super Bowl Sunday has been a whirlwind.



The team made it to the state championship game. Credit...Adam Perez for *The New York Times*

When I first met the team in mid-November, they were undefeated but unheralded. An article about