

12. Fame

In this chapter titled "Fame," the narrative chronicles the remarkable success of the California School for the Deaf, Riverside (CSDR) Cubs football team, who continued their winning streak into October, captivating the deaf community of Southern California. Notable player Phillip Castaneda shone in a game against Desert Chapel, scoring four touchdowns and achieving 232 yards, demonstrating his impressive skill on the field after a challenging personal journey.

Amidst this success, alumni returned to support their team, reminiscing about their own experiences and the long-overdue recognition for the school. Coaches, former players, and family members—many deaf themselves—expressed how playing for the Cubs transformed their lives, particularly highlighting changes in confidence and happiness. Jeremias Valencia, a former basketball record holder and father of standout wide receiver Jory Valencia, shared his family's legacy of overcoming adversity, including their migration from southern Arizona to Riverside for better opportunities. Jory proved to be an asset on the field, demonstrating remarkable athleticism and resilience.

As the Cubs approached a game against Desert Christian, with a record of 10-0, excitement soared. A journalist covering the story witnessed the unique vibes at CSDR, where traditional game environments were replaced by signed communication among players and spectators. Understanding the challenges faced due to their marginalized context, CSDR's victories began to gain national attention, culminating in an article about their journey that went viral.

Media requests flooded in, featuring notable outlets like NBC and ABC, while Disney considered producing a documentary. This newfound fame brought about significant opportunities, including an invitation to participate in the Super Bowl coin toss and recognition for Coach Keith Adams as coach of the year. However, the rapid rise in attention presented challenges, particularly for players like shy Trevin Adams, who struggled with the spotlight.

The narrative highlights how the Cubs' achievements have initiated discussions on deafness and inclusion, serving as an inspiration for overcoming adversity. As CSDR prepares to expand its facilities with substantial funding from the state, the team has captured national attention, symbolizing hope and resilience for the deaf community.