

## Soccer-loving 10-year-old boy dies in crash coming from tournament

By Sandra Gonzales  
Mercury News

Posted: 11/18/2008 10:28:42 PM PST

### Guest book

- [Share your condolences](#)

Even in the final moments of his 10-year-old life, all Jonathan Manzo Chavez thought of was his white-and-green-striped soccer jersey as he stumbled from the family's mangled minivan.

He held his stomach in pain and moaned. But when the paramedics arrived and wanted to cut off his shirt and shorts to tend to his injuries, he cried out, "Don't cut them, don't cut them, I have a game tomorrow."

Hours later, the San Jose fifth-grader died — the same day he scored a rare goal in a Manteca soccer tournament, a sport he had been around ever since he could walk.

"I still can't believe this is real," said his mother, Amalia Chavez.

Jonathan, his mother and two older siblings were on their way home to San Jose late Saturday afternoon when their minivan collided with a Toyota Corolla that had lost control and spun in front of them on Vallecitos Road in Livermore.

Chavez recalled looking immediately to the back seat at her two youngest children.

Jonathan and his sister, Zaira, 13, writhed in pain. Jonathan, still wearing his jersey and shorts — triumphant after a soccer game earlier that day — was crying.

He struggled loose from his seat belt, got out of the car and lay on the ground. "He was grabbing his stomach and telling me, 'Mommy, I can't see you,'" Chavez said. He became agitated when the paramedics arrived and tried to cut off his shirt. — "They are going to cut my jersey, get my jersey," his brother Rafael, 15, recalled him saying. So his mother slipped off his jersey before a helicopter flew him to Children's Hospital in Oakland.

"I still remember him telling me, 'Don't leave me, you have to stay with me,'" Chavez said.

Chavez and Rafael, however, were taken to other hospitals, where they were later released.

Zaira, who was flown to Oakland with Jonathan, can't forget the ride.

"He was screaming, I was holding his hand," Zaira said. Then she felt it go limp. "I saw a straight line and squiggle on the machine, and I thought probably they had put him to sleep." Jonathan, the family says, died of internal injuries.

Tuesday, his soccer team, Santa Clara Sporting, was still grasping at the enormity of the loss of the teammate they called "Pretty Boy," a nickname he earned because of his crisp style of dress and penchant for always combing and gelling his hair. But more than that, his spirit was a vital part of the team. Whenever he scored, he would run to the sidelines, throw his arms into the air and do a shuffle.

"We're going to miss his celebration. He loved soccer. He loved to play. And I think the jersey

Advertisement

# MercuryNews.com

The Mercury News

# (800) 870-NEWS

## Subscribe today!

[www.mercurynews.com](http://www.mercurynews.com)



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

# The Mercury News

MercuryNews.com

represented his friends," said his coach, Carlos Brasil.

Clara, Calif. 95050. For more information click [here](#).

As a defensive player, Jonathan seldom got the chance to score, but that day he did. His parents had promised him new Vans Classics shoes like his brother's if he scored. So they were on their way to Eastridge mall to buy them when the crash happened.

"Before the crash, he was talking about scoring that goal, and kept asking, 'Did you see that?' " Rafael said.

The family shared a love of soccer and rarely missed each other's games. Even though his father, a truck driver, worked that day, he managed to drive to Manteca from San Jose to catch part of the game.

Jonathan's treasured jersey? Chavez loaned it to one of his friends, who stopped by and wanted something to cling to.

But his mother plans to bury him this weekend in a duplicate set.

As for Jonathan's No. 8, it's been retired. Said Brasil: "Nobody will ever use that number again."

Contact Sandra Gonzales at [sgonzales@mercurynews.com](mailto:sgonzales@mercurynews.com) or (408) 920-5778.

## how to help

Financial support and donations to help defray hospital and burial costs can be made electronically via a PayPal Account set up for the Chavez family, or checks can be sent in the name of "Jonathan Manzo Chavez Memorial Trust" (Acct # 376000010) to the United Labor Bank at 2550 N. First Street, Suite 102, San Jose, Calif. 95131. They can also be mailed to the Santa Clara Sporting office at 282 Brokaw Road, Santa

Advertisement

# MercuryNews.com

The Mercury News

# (800) 870-NEWS

## Subscribe today!

[www.mercurynews.com](http://www.mercurynews.com)



Print Powered By FormatDynamics™