

SDA water polo player Dylan Herrera hits the right note



Dylan Herrera is a member of The Elements rock band. (Courtesy)

Gideon Rubin

On the surface, the skill-sets required to play competitive high school water polo and succeed in the music business don't offer obvious similarities.

Dylan Herrera, an incoming junior at San Dieguito Academy (SDA), is the first to admit that.

But from his perspective, both ventures are a lot easier when you can get everyone on the same page.

Herrera should know.

He's emerged as a rising star for the school's burgeoning water polo program, and performs and manages a teen rock band, The Elements, that's gained recognition this

summer.

“There’s the teamwork in both, you’ve got to listen to everyone’s critiques and make suggestions,” Herrera said. “For this little play in water polo, you could’ve done this or that, or what songs should go over here or over there, and change the order of that.”

Herrera seems to be figuring it out, even when unexpected challenges come up.

Herrera didn’t have much time to prepare for his varsity water polo debut.

He got called up from the junior varsity at the end of the season when senior goalie Conner Dahl suffered a broken hand.

“I didn’t know until a couple of days before CIF (San Diego Section playoffs) that he wouldn’t be able to play,” Herrera said.

Herrera immediately noticed a game that was faster and more physical in the Division III playoffs.

“It was a lot of pressure,” Herrera said.

Herrera immediately impressed.

“Dylan really sort of presented himself as a leader and really stepped up his game and got a lot of confidence going into the playoffs,” SDA coach Scott Kling said.

Herrera played goalie for the Mustangs for their best playoff run in school history. SDA reached the Division III finals, losing to Helix 8-6. The two teams were tied at 5-5 after three quarters. Herrera had 11 saves.

Although he was still on the junior varsity team, Herrera worked with Dahl on his game, and spent some time practicing with the varsity team.

“It was really helpful because everyone knows each other

at San Dieguito Academy,” Herrera said. “It’s a huge family.”

His rock band is a smaller family.

Herrera and Julian Boyer, a Solana Beach resident, are the only full-time members of The Elements band. Boyer plans to go out for the SDA water polo team this fall.

The Elements will cross-promote their music and their sport next month at the Aquatic Games, an event created by five-time Olympian **Tony Azevedo**. The Elements will perform during the opening ceremonies on Aug. 2 at Cabrillo High School in Long Beach.

Herrera is a relative newcomer to water polo. He was in middle school when he started playing on the suggestion of a swim instructor who noticed during lessons that he had a natural eggbeater kick, which enables poloists to stay afloat keeping their hands free.

Herrera will compete next month at the Junior Olympics for the Del Mar Water Polo Club.

For now, Herrera is focused on developing his game and enjoying the moment. Playing collegiately isn’t something he thinks about much.

“I just want to have fun,” Herrera said. “It would be awesome to play at the college level but it’s no big deal, it’s just really fun to play and hang out with all the guys and just build friendships.

“It’d be fun to continue on but it’s just a fun hobby, it’s not like it’s my dream to play in college.”

Kling believes Herrera would have a lot to offer a Division II or III program, noting the vast majority of Division water polo scholarships go to players in Los Angeles and Orange Counties.

“He’s a real gamer,” Kling said. “He takes on a challenge and sort of breaks it down and figures out how he can apply himself as best as he can, and he’s pretty tenacious, he just does not give up.”

Music has been part of Herrera’s life since he was practically a toddler.

He started playing piano when he was 3 and took lessons for about 10 years.

Boyer is a vocalist, bassist and keyboardist.

Herrera plans to study music and visual arts. He is taking sound mixing video editing classes at Mira Costa College over the summer.

The Elements performed earlier this year at the Encinitas Spring Street Fair, Leucadia Battle of the Bands, Fiesta del Sol, and La Costa Valley Memorial Day BBQ. Their most recent performance was at the San Diego County Fair.

“It was really exciting seeing people that you don’t even know having a good time and listening to the music and actually enjoying it,” Herrera said. “That was really fun and satisfying.”

All indications are that Herrera’s hitting the right note in the pool and on the stage.

“Going into the playoffs is a tall order,” Kling said. “We were asking a lot of him coming out of JV ball and he really rose to the occasion. He kind of does that with everything.”