



Hayden Partain is a midfielder, a Sac Republic FC player and, now, a Sacramentan.

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One-way ticket

Sacramento Republic FC's training session at Cosumnes River College was wrapping up, shortly after noon on May 3. Simon Elliot—Coach Simon, to the team—delivered his trademark brutal honesty to the squad in his booming New Zealander accent.

Dallas native and FC midfielder Hayden Partain was in the middle of the shortened field, all ears, wearing neon orange cleats. Twenty-four years old and a slim 5 feet, 8 inches, he wouldn't have been so imposing if it weren't for the cerebral aura he exuded. He was clearly a man on a mission.

The next day, Partain scored his first goal of the USL Championship season with a left-footed one-timer at Cashman Field in Las Vegas before 7,478 soccer fans. It wasn't the midfielder's first success in a career defined by perseverance. SN&R chatted with Partain about the path that led him to Sacramento's United Soccer League team.

What sorts of adversity have you worked through to get where you are today?

When I graduated college, we lost the national championship. And I, if I scored my PK in the shootout, we would have won it. So I was kind of at my lowest of lows, in all honesty.

And that was with Wake Forest?

Yeah. And two of the players on our team now, they were on that team that beat me, [the

Stanford Cardinal]. You know? But I was eligible in the [Major League Soccer] draft. I didn't get drafted ...

There were seven different failures in trying out with teams and stuff. I was paying my own way everywhere. I was sleeping on floors ...

I could have gone and gotten a job. I have an economics degree with a minor in entrepreneurship. Like, I can do many things with that, but my passion and my goal is to be a pro ... I went home. I worked three part-time jobs to stay afloat in the meantime, while I was training.

And who did you end up playing for?

The team's called Des Moines Menace and it's in Des Moines, Iowa. ... They called me ... so I played there. I worked a nine-to-five job and I scored a lot of goals in a short amount of time.

... And then, somehow, Sacramento called me, and they had an injury here in the position that I play ... I bought a one-way ticket here. So after a week, I made the team. I got paid back. I've been here since.

I'm getting married, actually. In a month. This month, actually. So my fiancée will move out here. We've been together since high school. Sacramento will be our home.

What advice do you have for youths in Sacramento who dream of playing professional soccer?

Um, just, every day find a way to be better, and don't be discouraged when things don't work out because there's always another way. ... There's just all these things that, that can really push you away from it, you know? And you can fault out, but it's a grind, like, it's not an easy path. □

"I worked a nine-to-five job and I scored a lot of goals in a short amount of time,"

Hayden Partain
Sac Republic FC midfielder

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