

# Dons trio are 'like a family'

Football, basketball stars Lloyd, Nelson & Uribe are multi-talented

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It doesn't matter the season or the surface. Chances are anyone who's attended a basketball or football game at Santa Barbara High School over the past few years has watched a trio of talented student athletes busily steal the show.

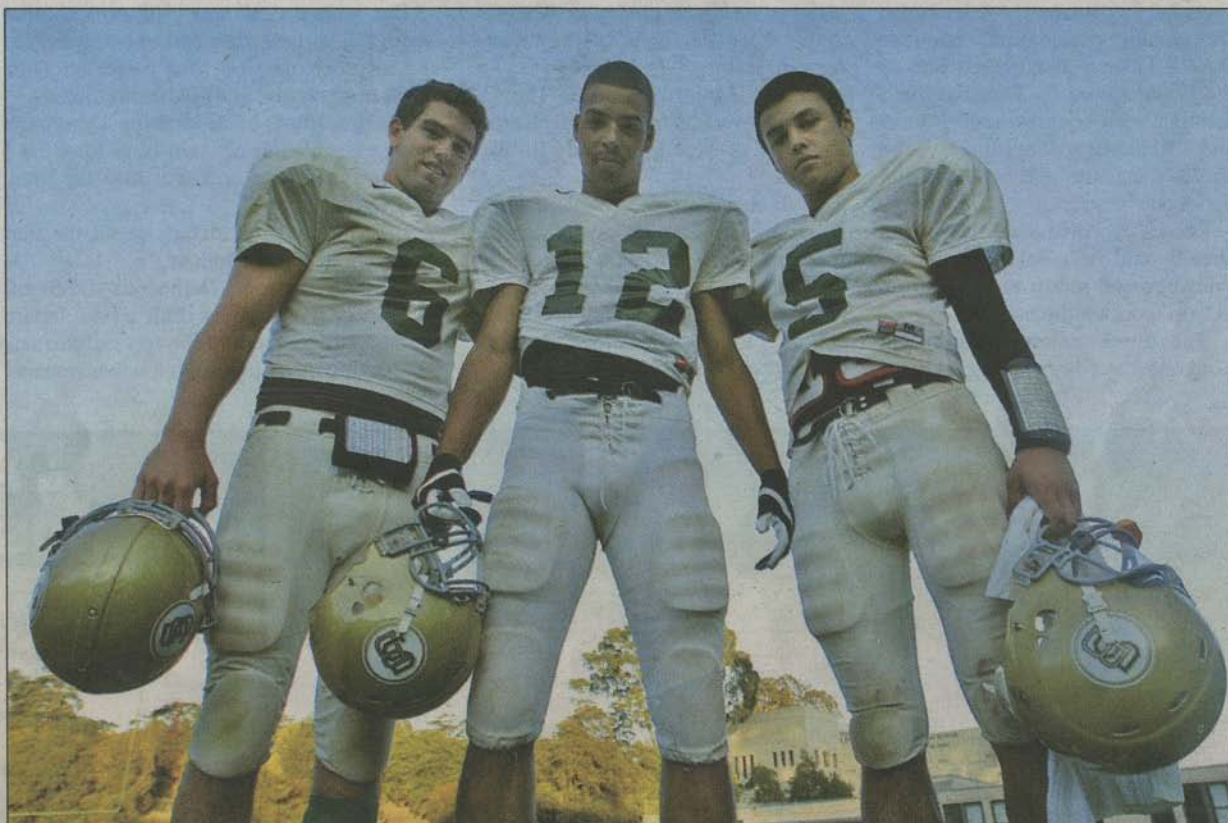
For much of the past four years, they've been the bread and butter of those teams, muscling their way through the ranks, preparing for the finale of three brilliant prep careers.

They've been hit hard, missed tough shots, but made many more. And in the process, have become more than mere teammates.

"We're like a family," said Dons receiver and backup quarterback Roberto Nelson, who recently made a verbal commitment to play basketball at Oregon State University next year.

That family is arguably the most talented in the county. Along with Nelson, it includes the likes of Dons starting quarterback John Uribe and tight end

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Santa Barbara High School football standouts Bryson Lloyd, Roberto Nelson and John Uribe, who are all also starters on the Dons' basketball team, feel being multi-sport athletes is an advantage. They hope to lead the Dons to their first victory of the season tomorrow night against Righetti High School.

## DONS

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Bryson Lloyd.

The three are currently zeroing in on ensuring Santa Barbara busts into the post season for the second year in a row.

But the path that's led to this point started long ago.

Nelson and Lloyd remember playing basketball, football and pretty much every other sport together at Franklin Elementary School.

"We have a chemistry together," said Lloyd. "It's kind of a weird trio we have together."

Uribe grew up playing sports at Marymount of Santa Barbara, a kindergarten through eighth grade private school.

But that pitted him against Lloyd and Nelson on many occasions, and the three boys eventually became friends.

While Nelson and Lloyd began carving out names for themselves as Dons, Uribe started high school as a Bishop Diego Cardinal.

That didn't last long, however, with the constant pushing from Lloyd and Nelson for Uribe to transfer and become a Don, which he did at the end of his sophomore year.

"It was a big transfer, but now I'm so glad I came," Uribe said.

So is Lloyd.

After the starting quarterback graduated prior to his junior year, Lloyd was a candidate for the starting job — one he didn't prefer.

So he turned the pressure up on Uribe to transfer, and the rest has been history.

The tight-knit group believes their closeness helps them on the field and the court.

"We're not too worried when we're on the field," Nelson said. "We know where we've got to be."

The three alone are enough to scramble the best of defenses. Nelson is constantly sprinting through the secondary, threatening to break out with a big play

on every play.

When the defense doubles or triples up there, Lloyd cuts shorter routes, and racks up constant first downs. When that doesn't work out, the Dons' solid offensive line usually creates a gap big enough for the quick Uribe to scramble and pick up yardage.

And when none of that works out for the Dons, Head Coach Will Gonzales has plenty of other offensive weapons in wide receivers Andrew Mendoza, Kyle Leonard and Francisco Ibarra.

While Gonzales believes it's important to not work kids so hard they burn out on sports, he believes the more sports they play, the better athletes they'll be.

The head coach, who once played basketball, football and baseball at San Marcos High School, said he would never discourage an athlete from playing two or three sports.

"We try to be flexible," Gonzales said. "At Santa Barbara High we do a good job of sharing athletes."

Gonzales passes down the same shards of wisdom to his athletes as his father did to him: Mainly that playing sports in high school is an opportunity that only happens once.

"My father told me do them all," he said. "Have the time of your life. You'll never get to do this again."

Gonzales feels Uribe, Nelson and Lloyd's close-knit friendship through both sports has helped his squad excel.

"They have a pretty tight bond with each other and it definitely translates to the football field and basketball court," he said.

Dons basketball coach Chris Hantgin agrees that playing more than one sport rounds out the athlete, which ultimately compliments both of the sports.

"Anytime you do well in one sport you'll play well in the other sport," he said.

Hantgin, whose team practices through the football season, said the one disadvantage for his purposes is three of

his starters won't start basketball conditioning until November, if all goes as planned and the Dons make the playoffs.

The players and Hantgin both agreed the impacts of this are negative, since basketball requires a different, generally more vigorous, fast-paced type of conditioning.

"There's definitely going to be a transition period," Hantgin said. "It will be a little bit of a slow start for us. Hopefully we'll be injury free."

And that brings up another concern: Injuries.

Hantgin said he doesn't worry too much about injuries, especially with Nelson, since he's generally not taking hits behind the line of scrimmage.

Gonzales said he too doesn't worry much, and said the chances of getting injured skateboarding or doing any other activity is just as likely as in playing football.

He did say he told Oregon State head basketball coach Craig Robinson he'd do his best to keep Nelson injury free. But apparently Robinson is from the same school of thought as Gonzales.

"He said he thinks it will be good for [Nelson] to be out here," Gonzales said.

The three athletes will be back at work this Friday in Santa Maria against Righetti High School.

So far, the Dons are off to a 0-2 start, a statistic Nelson, Lloyd and Uribe don't believe accurately reflects the level of talent on their football team.

While explaining themselves during practice yesterday in Peabody Stadium, the three friends and teammates finished each other's sentences similar to how they come together on the field and basketball court to finish plays.

Lloyd: "We're starting off slow and now we're working our way back up."

Uribe: "We just take it one game at a time."

Nelson: "That's all you really can do."

The Dons' next home game is Oct. 3 against San Luis Obispo.