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# PIKE NEWS

## Azard uses soccer to overcome tough childhood

It has always been his safe space. That was how senior Anelson Azard has always viewed the soccer field. Anelson was born in Haiti, a country known for extreme poverty. Despite that, he learned to love soccer at the age of four, playing with the older kids on a run-down soccer field.

"The ball was not in the best condition. The field was dirty with holes in it. There was crime all over my neighborhood, and yet that field was my safe space," he said. "It allowed me to forget everything that was happening around me"

Seeking a better life, his family left Haiti and settled in Key West, Florida before moving to Indiana just two years ago.

Anelson lives with his mom and dad and he has three siblings who have supported him throughout his soccer career and every transition he has endured throughout his life.

When he first joined Pike's team he said, "It was a different challenge."

His teammates took care of him and made sure he was good on and off the field. After only two years on the team, Anelson did something no one in Pike Soccer history has done before. Not only did he lead the team to back-to-back sectional titles, but he broke the season scoring record, which was previously 35 goals in a season.

The day he broke the record, he said his confidence was high. He attributes much of his confidence to his coaches and teammates and their belief in him.

His adrenaline was pumping, and he knew he was about to score. Luke Smith received the ball, and he was moving into his space. As he went into the open space, the ball went right to Anelson.

Senior Leo Spitznagle was proud to be on a team with Anelson and joked, "Yeah it was great to be on a team with a guy who broke the record, but if he hadn't I could have scored more goals."

Although he took time to celebrate, there was still work left to be done in the season. After winning sectionals, #4 Pike had to face the toughest competition yet -- #2 ranked Carmel.

In a game that came down to the wire, Pike had the game won when a Carmel save sent the game into a 14-minute overtime, resulting in penalty kicks. Anelson's season ended just like that, with a 1-1 (4-3 PKs) loss.

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*"The soccer field has always been my safe space, a place where I could forget about everything else."*

**Anelson Azard, 12**



Before the loss, Anelson was thinking, "We just have to score in the penalty shootout." He let his friend go first but admitted if he were to do it again he'd go first.

Leo said the end of the season was brutal. "To lose like that. We lost but we could've done so much more. We were one of the best teams in the state; we just didn't play like it," he said.

Pike soccer's team finished the season 20-3 overall and 4-1 in the MIC Conference. Anelson ended the season with 45 goals, a record that is sure to stay for awhile. Anelson says he loved his experience at Pike, but wants to go to college and major in sports communication.

While Anelson wishes his high school career would have been longer -- all the way to state, to him he loves the game more than he loves the score. It is because of his background, the place where he first learned to love the game.

He talks about it with a sloppy grin on his face. "It goes back to where I started playing at four years old when it was all about me having fun and playing with my friends."

 **LUIS GONZALEZ/**  
**PHOTO**



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