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Introduction

As we close out the 2024 season, we reflect on an unforgettable championship journey. This year's YFFL finale was a testament to the power of teamwork, perseverance, and the leadership that defines our program. From the intense battles on the field to the inspiring stories off it, this season has been nothing short of spectacular.

I am immensely proud of all our players, coaches, volunteers, and supporters who continue to make YALD a place where young athletes grow into leaders, both in sport and in life. This season held deep meaning for the YALD community as we dedicated it to the memory of Miguel Guzman, lovingly called Coach Mickey. His legacy of leadership and mentorship inspired us to strive for excellence, unity, and growth both on and off the field.

Let's dive into the incredible journey of the 2024 season!

Season's Final Reflection

"True leadership is not just about winning, it's about lifting others up and inspiring them to reach their fullest potential. The real victory is in the growth we see in those we lead."—

Carlos A. Castellanos

A Championship Season to Remember: The Will Titans Claim 2024 YFFL Glory!

On December 14, 2024, the electrifying finale of YALD's 14th YFFL season unfolded. In a display of grit, skill, and heart, the Will Titans, guided by the seasoned coaching duo of Adalberto Fernandez and Jason Cedeno, clinched a remarkable 19-0 victory over the House of Pain. While Coaches Leandro Castellanos and Eugene Amankwah molded a formidable opponent, this championship belonged to the Titans.

More than just a score, this victory represents the essence of YALD's mission—leadership, teamwork, and the growth of young athletes striving for greatness.



A Battle for the Ages

The championship game was as intense as the chilly December evening. Both teams locked in a midfield duel in the opening moments, neither able to pass the first-down mark. With defensive prowess on full display, over five interceptions were exchanged before the deadlock was broken.

The breakthrough came when David Rivera intercepted a pass and returned it for the first touchdown of the game, shifting momentum decisively in favor of the Will Titans. From that moment, the Titans' defense, a wall of steel, stymied the House of Pain's renowned scoring machine.



Offensive Brilliance

Quarterback Emil Rivera rose to the occasion, showcasing his precision and leadership. He connected with Max Parker-Benson for two touchdowns, tallying 6 completions, 1 extra point, and converting 2 first downs with Max's contributions. Emil's unselfish play extended the spotlight to two rising stars.

David Benros delivered with 7 receptions, while Emil's younger brother, David Rivera, contributed 6 receptions and converted a pivotal first down. Emil's ability to distribute the ball demonstrated his trust in his teammates and his mastery of the game.



Defensive Domination

The Will Titans' defense was a force to be reckoned with. Max Parker-Benson showcased his versatility, contributing 2 deflections, 2 interceptions, and a crucial flag pull that derailed a promising House of Pain drive. Meanwhile, David Rivera turned in a performance for the ages with 1 deflection, 3 interceptions, including a game-altering pick-six, and an impressive 8 flag pulls.

This defensive masterclass underscored the Titans' teamwork and their relentless drive to secure the championship.





EMIL RIVERA: A Testament to YALD's Mission

Emil Rivera, the championship-winning quarterback, embodies the values and vision of YALD. Emil began his journey in the youth clinic farm in 2018, a program led by David Calderon and Kevin Camilo to nurture future YFFL athletes. Emil dedicated himself to the clinic until the age of 12, when he began his YFFL career.

In 2020, Emil won his first championship under Coach Jason Ceden, showcasing his budding talent and commitment. This year, Emil added another ring to his collection, leading the Will Titans to victory in the 2024 season.

After the game, two heartwarming discoveries highlighted Emil's character and journey. First, it became clear how deeply Emil is loved and supported, as friends braved the cold to cheer him on, chanting his nickname, "Mimi," from the sidelines. Second, Emil shared the incredible news that he has been accepted to Davidson College, where he will join the Class of 2029.

We are immensely proud of Emil Rivera—not only for his achievements on the field but also for the young man he has become and the potential he continues to embody. Emil, you are the reason we started this organization, and your journey inspires us to carry forward our mission.

Thank you for the memories, your leadership, and your support for your teammates—not just in moments of triumph but also during challenging times. Congratulations, Emil, and best wishes as you begin this exciting new chapter.





Legacy of Teamwork and Excellence

The partnership of Jason Cedeno and Adalberto Fernandez has been a cornerstone of YALD's success story. First joining forces in 2011 during YALD's inaugural season, the duo has grown into two of the program's most respected leaders. In 2017, they found themselves on opposite sidelines in the championship game, with Adalberto's team emerging victorious. Yet, their mutual respect and dedication to YALD's core mission of youth empowerment remained unwavering.

Reuniting as co-coaches in 2023 and 2024, Jason and Adalberto combined their wisdom, strategy, and heart to forge a championship-winning team that exemplifies the very best of YALD.

Celebrating a Triumph

The Will Titans are not just the 2024 YFFL Champions—they are a shining example of what can be achieved through collaboration, discipline, and a shared vision. Coaches Jason Cedeno and Adalberto Fernandez have once again demonstrated that success is built on strong leadership, relentless effort, and belief in one another.

Congratulations to the Will Titans for an unforgettable season and an extraordinary championship victory!

Here's to closing the year on a high note and to many more triumphs to come!

Leaders Who Inspire: 2011 to Now

From humble beginnings in 2011, David Calderon, Kelvin Valentin, Miguel "Mickey" Guzman, Jason Cedeno, Adalberto Fernandez, and Carlos Castellanos laid the foundation for YALD's mission to explore new horizons. Fourteen seasons later, their legacy exemplifies what teamwork, consistency, passion, and love for the community can achieve.

David Calderon started as head coach of the Ice Air Giants, leading his team to four championship appearances and securing back-to-back titles in his final seasons as head coach. He now serves as YALD's President. Kelvin Valentin began as Coach Mickey's assistant, became a referee in 2012, and now leads as League Program Director. Coach Jason Cedeno left his mark with teams like the Bengals, Carlito's Way, and Wolfpack, while Adalberto Fernandez brought success to La Sala 78 and the Panthers, inspiring countless athletes along the way.

Today, YALD thrives as a family, thanks to the dedication of incredible members like Leandro, Eugene, Robert, Leo, Austin, Rafael, Jeremiah, Kevin, Luis, Judy, Rene, Chino, Omar, Adrian, Aldo and Fernando. Together, you've made this season unforgettable. Thank you for continuing to embody the spirit of leadership and community.





"It was an honor to toss the coin for the championship game on Saturday morning. Witnessing the young men play with such heart and dedication, alongside their mentors who guide them to be honorable young men and our future leaders, was truly inspiring. Thank you for his wonderful opportunity and the honor to be part of such a meaningful event."

— Dr. David L. Bell

The Final Honorary Coin Toss: Celebrating Dr. David L. Bell

The 2024 YFFL championship game's ceremonial coin toss was performed by Dr. David L. Bell, MD, MPH—a pioneer in adolescent medicine and an advocate for young men's health. As Medical Director of the Family Planning Program at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, including the Young Men's Clinic, Dr. Bell has championed respectful, high-quality care for young males since 1999.

Beyond his clinical work, Dr. Bell is an educator, mentor, and global advocate, shaping adolescent care programs internationally and serving on influential advisory boards. His work has earned national recognition, but for me, his greatest role has been that of a mentor and friend, shaping my journey since I was 16 years old.

Dr. Bell's story is a testament to the power of mentorship and community impact. It was an honor to have him close the season with this meaningful gesture. Thank you, Dr. Bell, for inspiring us to empower the next generation.

Honoring Coach Mickey: A Legacy of Dedication and Empowerment

This year, we honor Miguel Guzman, known as Coach Mickey—a pillar of the YALD community. More than a coach, he was a devoted father, trusted friend, and mentor who shaped countless young lives through football and life lessons of unity, perseverance, and responsibility.

To celebrate his enduring impact, the championship trophy has been renamed the Miguel Guzman Championship Trophy, and the league restructured to reflect the teams he passionately led. Though Mickey passed on May 24, 2024, his spirit inspires us to carry forward his legacy with gratitude. Thank you, Coach Mickey, for all you gave to YALD. Your legacy lives on.



CLOSING REMARKS

As we reflect on the 2024 season, we do so with heartfelt gratitude for the life and legacy of Miguel Guzman. Dedicating this season to Coach Mickey has been an honor, reminding us of the incredible impact one person can have on a community. His spirit will continue to guide us as we look ahead to the future of YALD.

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! May this season bring you peace, joy, and cherished moments with loved ones. Here's to an even brighter 2025 for YALD!

Yours in Service,

Carlos A. Castellanos
Founder & Executive Director
YALD, Inc.