



'Fitzy' returns to lineup for LCC

Mavericks senior among soccer elite

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CARLSBAD . **John Fitzpatrick** scored a game-winning goal for La Costa Canyon High soon after joining the varsity midway through his freshman year. As a reward, the newcomer got to clean up the home field after the game.

Subsequent rewards have become much greater for the high-scoring forward, now a senior with the Mavericks. **Fitzpatrick** has made three trips to Europe for soccer, has competed for the U.S. junior national team and has earned a scholarship to Cal.

"Obviously, he's become one of the elite soccer players in the country, and he has the potential to be a pro," LCC coach David Cohen said. "He has good character on and off the field. He's very committed to the game, and he's a real leader by example."

The Mavericks (11-0-1) are looking to contend for the San Diego Section Division I title this year, led by **Fitzpatrick**, who made his season debut this week after recovering from surgery for a groin injury. The team's last section crown came in **Fitzpatrick's** freshman season.

Going against older players wasn't new to **Fitzpatrick** as a ninth-grader. He had performed in similar situations in club soccer when called up to compete at higher age groups, sometimes with future high school teammates.

"I love playing with older players. You just get better," said Fitzpatrick, known as "Fitzy" to teammates and coaches. "It was easy coming in with those guys. They'd help me out. They'd play me the through ball, and it's not like I had to do extra stuff. I just had to play my position."

Following his freshman season, **Fitzpatrick** ventured to Europe for the first time as a member of the San Diego Surf club team, which qualified to attend the 2006 World Cup in Germany and play local youth teams.

In 2007, the 6-foot, 185-pound **Fitzpatrick** competed in a tournament in Ukraine as a first-time member of U.S. junior national team in the under-17 age group.

"The trip that blew my mind was Ukraine," Fitzpatrick said. "I never dreamed of going that far. Even though I didn't get much playing time, because (the coaches) were just checking me out, it was awesome. Wearing the U.S. jersey is the best feeling that anyone can have playing soccer."

Fitzpatrick headed to Ireland last summer on a team of Southern California all-stars for the prestigious Milk Cup. As a highlight, he scored on the deciding penalty kick in the semifinals.

What was probably the best feeling ever, **Fitzpatrick** said. It was a privilege to play there.



Deciding on college also involved **Fitzpatrick's ties** with older players. At Cal, he'll be reunited with former Surf teammates A.J. Soares (Torrey Pines High) and Servando Carrasco (St. Augustine), who will be juniors next season.

"I couldn't be more excited about it," **Fitzpatrick** said. "Oh my gosh, it's so much fun playing with them."

Fitzpatrick set career highs with 17 goals and nine assists last season for La Costa Canyon, which reached the Division I quarterfinals. **Now he's part of a veteran team paced by midfielders Johnny Espinoza and Zach Anderson and forward Edgar Aguilar.**

"Last year, I was realizing that I might have the ability to play professional," said Fitzpatrick, who scored a goal in Wednesday's 3-0 win over Rancho Buena Vista. "That changes your whole mind-set on everything."

Sounds like more rewards are ahead for Fitzpatrick.