

SOCCKER

Tucson Association of Realtors Shootout: 14-year-old makes a difference



JANUARY 19, 2013 12:00 AM • [ZACK ROSENBLATT SPECIAL TO THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR](#)

Not much fazes Payton Rudnick.

Two months ago, Rudnick was asked if he would light the torch to open the Tucson Association of Realtors Shootout.

He has done speaking engagements in front of 200 people without pause, so without hesitation he accepted the invitation.

On Friday, Rudnick lit the torch and kicked off the soccer tournament he played in while growing up. Now, he plays on the junior varsity team at Catalina Foothills High School.

The Shootout will begin play today throughout Tucson, featuring more than 5,000 players, and continue through Sunday night.

Rudnick said he was "a little" nervous about dropping the torch.

"But," he said, "I held on tight. It is fire."

For a 14-year-old, Rudnick is mature beyond his years. He has his own business cards, after all.

Rudnick and his parents credit his involvement with a national charitable organization called Peace Passers, which collects soccer gear and distributes it to children in need throughout the world. Rudnick created Give Through Soccer as part of a project for his bar mitzvah in 2011.

"At first, Payton didn't even want to go up and talk to soccer moms," said Wayne Rudnick, his father.

Added Julia Rudnick, his mother: "Now he knows how to walk up to somebody, look them in the eye and shake their hand and remember who they are and put thoughts together that maybe the typical teenager can't do yet. He'll walk into a room and do what he has to do because he knows what the game plan is, what the end goal is."

Payton Rudnick didn't initially intend to continue with the charity much past his bar mitzvah, but his experience captivated him and now, two years later, he is still passionately working on it.

He intends to make a trip to Ghana by the time he graduates high school because he feels "it'd be really great" to experience giving out the gear he worked to collect.

"It started out as just a mitzvah project to give back," Rudnick said. "But, I just figured I'd helped so much and I wanted to keep on doing it, so it's a great opportunity for me to learn. When I go up in front of a business group, I get experience I never would have before by talking to them and just talking to other people."

Initially, Rudnick set a goal to collect 400 soccer balls, 400 jerseys and \$3,000. After surpassing those goals with relative ease, he upped the ante - 500 balls, 500 jerseys and \$5,000.

Before the Shootout, Rudnick said he had collected 426 balls, 727 jerseys and more than \$3,000.

"I figured, since I already passed my original goals," Rudnick said, "I thought I should make new ones."