



Chico State students premiere 'El Clasico'

[By Susan Benitez/Appeal-Democrat](#)

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"El Clásico: More than a Game" is a documentary directed and shot by Chico State students. Premiering Friday at El Rey Theatre in Chico, the film was shot on location in Barcelona and Madrid, Spain, and explores Spanish history, culture and regional identity through the intense and world-renowned rivalry between soccer clubs Real Madrid and F.C. Barcelona.

In April 2010, nine Chico State students and alumni, including Sutter Union High School alumnus Zachary Fernandez, spent two weeks in Spain interviewing world-famous soccer stars, journalists, politicians and historians. They also attended El Clásico, the biannual game between Real Madrid and F.C. Barcelona, which is one of the most

famous and widely watched sporting events in the world.

The students learned that this monumental rivalry is not just a game of soccer but a way of understanding the very complex culture, history and regional identity of Spain.

"This film has a lot for everyone," said Fernandez, son of Estevan and Sally Fernandez of Sutter. "We have interviews with Cristiano Ronaldo — the wealthiest athlete in the world; we have footage of Lionel Messi — the greatest soccer player in the world; and then there's the historical side to the film. Spain is one of the more recent democracies to develop in the world."

Fernandez mainly worked behind the camera during the filming.

"You get to see both sides of the clubs — so if you're a Real Madrid fan, you get to see Barcelona's side; and if you're a Barcelona fan, you get to see Real Madrid. Most people know who they are, so I think they will appreciate seeing that the film is not just about soccer but about the clubs and the region of Spain," he said.

"People who have an interest in travel will appreciate this film," Fernandez added. "There's a huge soccer community that is getting bigger and bigger each year in the United States, and El Clásico is one of the biggest things that happens in soccer and has been going on for more than 100 years."

Fernandez said he discovered that he wanted to be a filmmaker after studying art and photography in high school and college. "I relate to it because it's a visual experience. I've always been interested in watching movies and the whole theater experience — getting your popcorn and soda and sitting down in the perfect seat. But the one thing I couldn't control was what was being shown in front of me.

"I always imagined stories that I could do, but I never had the tools. So I took some courses in film and learned that I don't need a lot of tools to know how to make a film. You need to have a good story and know how to show a good story, then go from there," he said.

Fernandez said it's important to him that Yuba-Sutter students know that local people can achieve their dreams: "I think people will appreciate that somebody who grew up here is able to do a project like this.

"You never really know that you can accomplish your dreams unless you give it a try," he said. "I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do until four years ago.

"My advice to students looking toward their dream job is — give it a try. Get out there and meet people. The main thing is don't give up; just keep working on it. Projects like this documentary film take time — they don't happen right away. So be patient," Fernandez said.

"It was pretty scary walking around a foreign country with thousands of dollars' worth of equipment. I was so protective of the camera that I had my wallet pickpocketed. Fortunately, four hours later, we were called by the Ministry of Police, and they said they had my wallet. So I learned on this trip what not to do — and always put your wallet in a zipped pocket or somewhere it's safe!" he said.

Fernandez graduated from Chico State in 2009 with a bachelor's in communication design, media arts. "After finishing this film, my next step is to apply to graduate school for a master's program in film, film studies or film producing, perhaps at University of Southern California, San Francisco State or University of Texas," he said.

The film project was overseen and produced by Chico State alumni Kelly Candaele and Cathy Growdon and co-produced by Celia Brugman.

The producers plan to show "El Clasico" at film festivals, on television and at special screenings throughout the United States and Spain. "Eventually, I would like to premiere the film in the Yuba-Sutter area, maybe taking it to area high schools and showing them. I would love to be able to do that this winter," Fernandez said.

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