



### This Is Soccer...Who Needs Hands?

“You’ve got to be kidding me ref,” a parent on the sideline yelled.  
“Hand ball, hand ball, the kid don’t even have hands.”

It is true, even without hands, Elijah has embraced the game of soccer and life as well.

Doctors have not given a name for the abnormality or reason for the difference of Elijah’s anatomy. Both arms extend to the elbows in a flexed position, with a single finger where the middle of the forearm would typically be. Until the age of 10, Elijah and his family had not seen or heard of anyone with his unique condition. Since then, he has found two lifelong friends that are identical in his anatomical structure. One is a 33 year old Brazilian female and the other is 4 year old Slovenian male.

Elijah has never been the type to be dependent for any of his needs or self-cares. As parents, it was thought that the best way for him to be independent was for him to be independent. At just a few months old he began to hold his bottle and remove the splints his Occupational Therapist had fabricated for him. His parents often asked him, “How can you be sooo messy without any hands?” That same drive is how Elijah has excelled in his life.

On the field and off, the young Clark, holds his own. He attends East Alexander Middle School, where he is in Academically Gifted classes. He currently plays for the 97 LNSC Black with the Lake Norman Soccer Club in Mooresville, NC. He began playing soccer as a bashful four year old with Alexander County Recreation Department. In the beginning, his coaches and referees were pleasant but apprehensive about his needs and safety. After a little coaching for the coaches, they learned to treat Elijah just as they treated other children, and he soon started to flourish in the game. It wasn’t long until the refs would rightfully call handball on the kid with no hands.

Elijah along with 12 other passionate players earned the privilege to advance to the US Finals of the Volkswagen Jr. Master’s in Washington, DC. This is Elijah’s first year playing in the competitive league and with his current teammates. It has taken him some time to adjust, but with the support of the team and coaches he is making the transition. As the Center Attacker his determination and aggressiveness is paying off.

“Hold your head high, never back down, speak loud and clear,” are the things his family has instilled in him. All children need to hear those things, but Elijah even more, because in this day and time there is still discrimination. However, this has not hindered him from playing the game he loves and excelling to overcome the odds.

Elijah and his family give extended thanks to God, all the coaches, referees, and teammates for supporting him in his efforts to surpass all expectations.



97 LNSC Black