

"My Team, My Players?"

David Dengerink, President & Technical Director, Virginia Rush Soccer Club

In speaking with coaches across the country or right here in Virginia, I constantly hear coaches discussing "my team, my players". The level of ownership, in most cases, seems to have lost its perspective. I often wonder if this is because of our egos as coaches, our lack of true confidence, or do we derive a sense of self worth from our involvement? For every coach it is probably for a different reason. Some of you may be asking "why is this even important?"

In working for the Rush for over a decade, coaches, directors, and players have come and gone. There is one common theme that has been present in each case where an accomplished team or individual player has arisen: multiple influences on that individual or group resulted in their excellence. This was not by accident, but by design. The structure of the club and the involvement of multiple coaches, directors, trainers, psychologists, and administrators gave the players and teams more opportunities to learn and develop. These various perspectives are important, if not essential.

The necessity for multiple coaches or teachers is scientifically backed. If one actually studies the development of athletes, musicians, scientists, etc. one will find that there are a host of technical people who have influence on the development of an individual. (If you are curious check out "Developing Talent in Young People" - Bloom) Throughout a student's development the coaches or teachers will change as the student's standard of performance rises. As the student progresses, each new coach or teacher will have different strengths that enable the student to further develop their abilities within the given arena. If an individual only receives guidance from one person throughout their career their knowledge will be limited to that of their mentor. This process of true development takes around 10,000 hours of time on task, roughly ten years! If "your" players only heard "your" perspective for ten years how many of them would you send on to the MLS? When examining the big picture of the development of excellence in an individual or team, the coach plays only a supporting role in a limited time frame.

Within this time frame we as soccer coaches have an opportunity to influence and help build. All of us have strengths and weakness as coaches. Some of us are strong technically, some are strong tactically. Some coaches are better suited to deal with the psychological side of working with older players while others find they are most effective working with younger players. Within our philosophy as the Rush we ideally like to change coaches every eighteen to twenty-four months depending on the situation. This gives the players a different perspective on the game, changes their environment, thus furthering their development. This also means that, as a coach, I need to do my very best to identify my own strengths and weaknesses. This awareness will enable me to relay my strengths to the players while improving my weaknesses by working with the staff of coaches around me. As a coach, this is the best thing about Rush soccer. We are surrounded by quality people, with good character, who believe in a common philosophy. We are part of a nationwide staff!

Our staff's job as Technical Directors, Directors of Coaching or Head Coaches is not to claim ownership of players or teams but to create an environment for the club. This environment needs to have multiple coaching influences that affect every team and every player. When the team succeeds, we all succeed. When a player makes an ODP team, gets a chance to play in college, or turns pro, we all have played a role. Rush coaches are here for the players, we are paramount in their development, but it is they who do the playing!

So the next time someone asks you about "your team", tell them you're playing your role in the team's development; teaching them as much as you can about the game. The next time someone asks about a "Rush player", answer with pride that you were part of a staff that helped this player reach his or her goals!

Question and Answer Segment

QUESTION: What is the AGM and when is the meeting?

ANSWER: It is the Arkansas Rush Soccer Club Annual General Meeting. The meeting will be held at the meeting room at First State Park on Sunday, April 13, 2008 at 3 pm. The agenda for the AGM will include an annual review, changes to the AR Rush By-laws, and the election of new Board members. For more information about the AGM, visit our website. If you would like to serve on the Board of Directors, please contact Vice President Mike Shaffer at VicePresident@ArkansasRush.com.

If you have a question you would like answered, please email it to td@ArkansasRush.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RUSH ADULT SOCCER LEAGUE (RASL) DELAYED UNTIL FALL 2008

The AR Rush has decided to delay the start of our Adult Soccer League until the Fall 2008 season. This change will allow us more time to organize and promote this new program. If you would like to help with this program, please email AdultLeagueDirector@ArkansasRush.com.

AR Rush Competitive Tryout Dates

The AR Rush Competitive tryout dates are now posted on our website, www.arkansasrush.com. To access these, click on the Competitive menu and then on Tryouts.

NEXT MONTH

Summer/Fall Events 2008