Michigan Rush grows to 8 USSF National "A" Licensed Coaches

Jason M. Smith *Gustavo Flores*

The Michigan branch of the Rush Soccer Club has recently observed its list of USSF ‘A’ licensed coaches on staff grow from six to eight, after coaches Jason M. Smith and Gustavo Flores recently earned their ‘A’ licenses. Smith and Flores now join Michigan Rush coaches Nicholas Deren, Eric Rudland, Aaron Smith, Mbiye Mpasu, Anil Joseph, and Mark Zathey, as coaches who have earned this prestigious level of coaching licensing.

The coaching staff at Michigan Rush, which now includes eight ‘A’ licensed coaches, has the most ‘A’ licensed coaches of any youth club in the state, and double the number of ‘A’ licensed coaches when compared to the next closest club. Michigan Rush’s Technical Director and Director of Coaching, Mark Zathey, said, “Professional coaching education courses are an essential element of the development of the coach. The Rush supports our coaches throughout the process of coaching education in formal courses, mentorship programs, and the time on task acquiring experience. We believe that our coaches are an extension of the club, who enhance the experience of the player and heavily impact their developmental path.”

Jason M. Smith was recently named the Director for the U11-U13 age groups in the Northville branch of the club. He currently splits his time, working in both the Northville and Jackson geographies of the club. Smith is no stranger to the college game either. After playing for four years at Spring Arbor University, where he earned his degree in Secondary Education, Smith has gone on and is currently the head coach of the men’s soccer program at Jackson Community College. He earned his USSF ‘A’ License in January 2012 and also holds a USSF National Goalkeeping License. When speaking about his ‘A’ license experience, Smith said “While this was the last stop on the USSF coaching license pyramid, it is the first stop on taking the knowledge I have accrued and using it effectively. It is my belief that coaching courses help to sharpen your vision and skill set to run a more effective training session for your players. If you invest in your players and your craft, then they will invest in you, themselves and the team.”

Gus Flores currently coaches in the Rush Capital Area branch and also serves Lansing Catholic High School as the girls varsity head coach. Originally from Kansas City, MO, Flores grew up playing soccer there before going on to play at Marquette University, where he graduated with a degree in Engineering. Flores himself has played soccer at various levels in seven different countries and also has an impressive résumé when it comes to coaching the game. He earned his USSF ‘A’ License in June of 2011 and also holds a USSF National Youth License. When speaking about his ‘A’ license experience, Flores said “Coaching education assists me in reflecting internally, and gauging externally, ways in which I can improve myself as a coach, facilitator, and communicator, to become a better teacher for my players. This experience has broadened my views on many facets of the game and the craft of coaching, and has helped to satisfy my appetite for more knowledge and experience in the world of soccer. My coaching opinions and processes have been galvanized through the ‘A’ license course.”

The Michigan Rush “A” licensed staff coaches believe that continued coaching education is a great way to learn new information, practices, and theories. Formal education courses are not the only means by which this can be accomplished, but they are a great resource and tool, which provide the coach access to information necessary for continued improvement. Licenses are an external validation that an individual coach made the commitment of time, energy, and finances to improve themselves as coaches. Eric Rudland, the director of coaching for Michigan Rush Jackson, said, “It is my hope, as a member of the Rush, that each coach challenges themself to grow, whether it is via coaching education or other avenues of development. At the end of the day, it’s about improving ourselves for the sake of the players we coach.”

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Matt Saul, Michigan Rush Jackson Director for U9-12 age groups and Director of the Michigan Rush Select program, Mark Zathey, Michigan Rush Technical Director and Director of Coaching, and Drew Ducker, Michigan Rush Downriver Director for U11-U13 age groups and Michigan Rush Hamburg Director of Coaching, recently earned their NSCAA Premier Diplomas. It is a great day for the Michigan Rush, as more and more members of their staff continue to be recognized for their excellence within their craft. Coaching licenses are a validation, but the true value is in the education. It is about coaches continuing to learn and study the game in its purest form, seeking to improve themselves, so that they can better serve the players that they coach.

Congratulations !

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