



Dale Schilly is the Academy Director and Program Director for Saint Louis Scott Gallagher – Illinois. He has been instrumental in the development of many professional players and countless collegiate players. As a member of the Region II coaching staff he has International Coaching experience vs. Boca Juniors(2-1), River Plate(2-0), Estudiantes(2-2), Fiorentina(1-1), Juventus(5-1), Celtic United(2-3), Rangers(3-4), Middlesborough(2-0), Lens, Pau, Toulouse, Bayern Munich, Newcastle, Club America, and Tahuichi.

Below is a list of Coach Schilly's accomplishments as a coach and a player.

Coaching Experience:

- Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville
- Marycrest International University
- FVB New Orleans - 3 state championships
- Metro FC - 1 Illinois state championship
- Midwest Regional League Champions U18 Boys

Other:

- Dutch Soccer Academy trained with Will Coerver and Frans Balkom.
- 1998 IYSA Coach of the year
- U14 ODP Region II /National Coach
- Major League Soccer 2007 Combine Coach - one of only FOUR in the USA
- USSF "A" License
- Member of Coaching Education Staff, IYSA

Playing Experience:

- Rosary - St. Louis
- Florida International University - 1982 NCAA Champions



What are the benefits, not only to the players involved in Academy League but also to the clubs involved in the USSF Academy League?

For the clubs involved in the Academy League, the benefits are numerous, too many to list here. Perhaps the two most relevant are the impact on the Academy players directly and the affect the Academy has on the younger players due to the Academy experience of the older player.

The rate at which players develop in the Academy environment is significantly increased. Simply put, the improvement is dramatic. When players compete against only elite level players on a daily basis in training and a weekly basis in matches, the individual weaknesses of all players are exposed. Every moment, whether game or training, is a test and if players have a deficiency in any of the four components of the game it is very apparent. This is the optimal environment for the player who is committed to taking the next step because it allows them to work on their issues, rather than masking those issues which occurs when elite level players train and play against lesser players. Due to the competitive nature of the league, the best players play. If a player is disappointed by their place in the team, it is their responsibility to commit more to their own development. We have definitely found that players improve more when faced with disappointment than when given false hope. Honesty and placing the impetus with the player to take responsibility for their own development helps to expedite the development process.

At this level, the game truly sorts out the players. Some players think they desire to reach the next level, but when presented with the challenges of the environment, are unable to adapt in a way that allows them to address the deficiencies in their game. These players struggle and the environment proves to be too much for them and are eventually released from the academy because they cannot meet the demands of the sport at this level. It should be said that there are very good players who are released from the Academy. These are not bad players, but the Academy is only for the very best. The fact is the Academy is composed of the top players in the entire United States and, therefore, Academy programs must be composed of the absolute best players within a geographic region. The Academy is very competitive; every game in the 30 game



schedule is fought fiercely as 3 points are cherished! The players who have committed to the league are very competitive by their very nature and work very hard day in and day out in training to earn the three points on the weekend. Very early in the year, players learn that games are won on the training pitch before the weekend. This brings a level of intensity to every single training session that, in the old format, was only seen a week or two before State Cup or Regionals. Now this intense developmental environment is in place for 6-7 months! The Academy environment is as close to a pro environment as one can replicate for youth in this country.

The Academy also helps our younger players. Our younger kids are getting better because of the experiences of the older kids and the lessons learned by our staff in the Academy environment. As I said earlier, deficiencies are exposed in all of the players in an environment where the player has to commit to dealing with those issues. The player and the coach have to work together to overcoming the problems. From a larger development perspective, it is the Academy Staff's responsibility to look at the deficiencies of the players who are currently in the Academy, in general, and take measures to ensure that the next generation of Academy players are prepared in a way that addresses those weaknesses prior to entering the Academy, thereby making them more prepared for the Academy experience. Over the course of this winter and spring, we have rewritten our curriculum based on the issues that became visible when our players started to compete against the best players in the country.

What are your thoughts regarding the USSF showcase events as well as the coaching education weekends?

The Showcases are incredible. There is not a detail forgotten, the players are well taken care of by the Federation and the atmosphere is perfect for the quality of player involved. There are over 200 college coaches at the Academy Showcases; that number dwarfs other Showcase events. On top of the college presence, a National Team coach scouts every game and provides detailed written feedback to each team after the event. Nike attends the events and completes SPARQ testing. Player's scores are entered into a national database where college



coaches, national staff and professional coaches can then compare Academy athlete's level of athleticism to each other. Gatorade provides free product and performs Hydration Testing to ensure athletes are properly hydrated for peak performance. Finally, to give kids a break from the soccer, there is a player lounge with fruit, Gatorade and something called XBOX, which the kids seem to like.

Coaching Education comes in several forms on the Showcase weekends. As mentioned above US National Staff coaches evaluate every game and provide a written report, but they also sit with you immediately following the game to discuss their thoughts. Having that immediate feedback is invaluable. Secondly, Academy club coaches can accompany US National Staff coaches while scouting games. This allows for interaction and additional insights from the perspective of the national staff. At the Winter Showcase in Lancaster this past December, the U23 National Team Goalkeeper Coach presented a session on a component of goalkeeping that scouts had identified as a problem amongst many goalkeepers in the Academy. Finally, US Youth National Team coaches do pre and post game talks around their exhibition matches. The last Showcase in Sarasota, both the U17 and U20 National coaches gave clinics around their exhibition matches. In the past, we never had this level of access to our national teams and staff.

As a result of the limited substitution rule and the number of quality matches, in your opinion, what are the tactical trends emerging throughout the Academy League?

Different regions of the country are learning different things. Because of the vast nature of America and the various influences that each region offer, environmental, cultural, socio economic, etc., the game is played differently from coast to coast. For us there are two areas that I see dramatic change. First, can the team take care of the ball and still have an end in mind. Secondly, can you defend collectively, and can it be sustained for a full match.



If you cannot take care of the ball, at the Academy level you end up chasing it for a great majority of the game. Obviously, the team cannot physically sustain itself when defending for long, long periods. This is especially true if a team has to do this on back-to-back days. On the other hand, if you are keeping it for the sake of keeping it, at this level you are more likely to get scored on than to score. On the defending side, if the defending plan is to chase the ball until you get it back, the team will lose its legs and get stretched. There is a need to defend both in groups and as a full team. Getting guys to share the workload is vital to making through the match.

As a result of feedback received from your players, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the Academy League?

The strengths of the Academy League are too many to list here. US Soccer has taken long needed steps to improve the game in the United States and the players are benefiting. On the soccer side of things, our players love the day in and day out competition. Due to the timing of the Academy season, our players are coming straight from high school teams where they are the best players on their teams. To come into an Academy environment where they are able to train with and against other elite level players on a daily basis is something our player's look forward to throughout the high school season. The Academy League has also allowed for us to professionalize our program in a way that was not possible in the old USYS format. Our players and coaching staff travel as a group, separate from parents, to all Academy events. The Academy is the closest thing to a professional environment in youth soccer. The benefits of the Academy League are not just contained to the field. It has also allowed for the development of camaraderie among the players and staff that in the old USYS format was not achievable. In the old format, players traveled to matches with parents, played, and then left or went back to the hotel with their parents where they might hang out with a few teammates. There was never any time for players to spend time together as an entire group away from the field. Since the inception of our Academy Program our teams and staff have played in a Wiffle-Ball Tournament and BBQ in Greensboro, a hike on Loveland Pass in Colorado, a trip to Santa Monica Pier in California, and a day at St. Armand's Square in



Sarasota just to name a few of our non-soccer experiences. We have received very little if any negative feedback from our players regarding the Academy program. Players in our club and from within our program want to be a part of the Academy League. Obviously, cost is an issue when there is so much traveling involved, however, by traveling as a group we are able to cut down on costs. In addition, when you consider the competition calendar followed by the average elite level player in the old USYS Model in order to get the necessary exposure (MRL, State Cup, Regionals, Blue Chip Showcase, Germantown Invitational, Disney Showcase, Metro Showcase, ODP, etc) and the cost associated with participating and traveling to those events, we feel that the cost of the Academy is comparable, the experience for the elite level player is better, and the exposure is greater.