Recently I had the chance to chat with former Rush Pikes Peak and Colorado Rush goalkeeper Erich Marscheider. After a standout youth career, he opted to pursue his dream of playing professionally. Erich recently signed his first professional contract with Houston Dynamo of the MLS. See below for Erich's thoughts on the pro game, how playing for Rush helped prepared him and his advice to young keepers that want to follow in his footsteps. Congratulations Erich, you have made us all very proud!

1. What are some of the differences between the pro game/training environment compared to the club environment?

The club environment is in place to develop skills and learn new techniques. My experience in the pro training environment is more of adjusting some minor things or "bad habits" and maintaining a consistent level of performance. Each day in any given week could be the exact same session as the previous day, the main focus is to develop consistency to make everything you do into a second nature habit.

2. What are the differences in the GK training (exercises, frequency, duration, intensity)?

For the most part, we have a set pattern to our warmup each day that is always the same. This is where the consistency comes in. One of the major differences at the pro level is that instead of taking a shot or service in a drill then swapping with the next keeper in line, you do your whole set before switching. Another difference is that when it's your time to train, you train, and you train hard. Your time to rest comes when you're serving or resting, not in between making a save and getting to your feet.

3. What has been your biggest adjustment now that you are a pro?

It's a tie. First off, I'm not used to being the new guy, or the young guy, or the 3rd string goalkeeper. It's a bit rough not playing and knowing that you're not going to play, which just makes me push that much harder so that I can eventually get some time. Secondly, you have to do so much more work off the pitch than when you're not a pro. It's my job to go home and relax and take care of my body, and it's also my job to go home and work out to become a better athlete. Everything you do when you're off the pitch is meant to prepare yourself mentally and your body physically for when you step back onto the pitch.

4. What did you learn at Rush that helped you become a pro?

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Rush taught me how to compete. We were to be treated as "young pros" while at Rush, meaning when we step out to play we give it our all and always respect our opponent regardless of what we know about them. Rush also taught me how to play and compete. We rarely play small sided here, but I always seem to step it up when we do because I don't lose. I hate losing. That's what I learned at Rush, despise losing so much that all there is to do is win.

5. Which coach/coaches have influenced you the most and why?

Erik Bushey (Colorado Rush Technical Director). No matter what the situation I had or the decision I made, he adjusted what he was planning so that he could help me get where I want. Wanna play another year of Academy to get recruited while going to Community College? Sure thing. Oh, you wanna go pro? Alright, let's get you into a good college and/or see what we can find you. You're dropping out of school to pursue a pro career? Absolutely, lets get you some more training in and let's see what we can do. No matter what, Erik has always put in just as much work for my career as I have. He's always stood by me and he's always been a great person to go to if I need anything. I simply would not be here if Erik Bushey hadn't given a damn.

6. What advice would you give to current Rush keepers that are aspiring to make it to the pro level?

If you want to be a pro, make a priority now rather than later. Prepare yourself NOW, for what could come later. Take care of your body, choose to rest when your body needs it, and put in the work away from the pitch. Don't think that just because you have training after school you can't lift or run or do pushups during lunch, because if you're taking care of your body like you should, you'll find the strength to train. Take advantage of all the opportunities you have at Rush. Train when you can and when your body can take it, as there is always a place to play. Boys, don't think that training with girls will hurt you, good training is good training (I trained with the U17 girls as well as my own team all the way up until I left for Houston). Girls, train with boys when you can, better competition (or more physical) is always a good thing to have.

The biggest piece of advice that I can give comes straight from Tim Schulz (Rush Soccer President and CEO) himself: Don't ever let anyone tell you that you can't do something, that you can't make it. If you want to make it, then all those people who say you're not good enough don't matter one bit. Don't try to prove it to them that you can make it, prove it to yourself and you will always make it.

Click here to see Erich's bio on the Houston Dynamo website.

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