



(03.14.11) Jimmy Bakos, who is the

Technical Director for South Africa Rush, recently had the chance to visit Rush Soccer headquarters in Colorado to experience the 'Rush Way' firsthand. Jimmy met with staff members from Rush Soccer and Colorado Rush in the hopes of bringing some of the programs so popular in the US, to South Africa. Jimmy took a few minutes during his trip to talk about Rush Soccer and the future of Rush in Africa.

How has the transition to Rush been going?

Status at the moment, we are in the process of recruiting new players, there is a lot of excitement. They are finding out about something that is new, something different. Really the only thing that is changing for us is the color of our uniform and the name of the club but we will continue on much the same. There is a lot of excitement about being part of the much larger Rush organization.

How many players are currently in the club?

By the time we finish registration we will be around 350 players ranging from 3-4 all the way to senior age. This will create about 30 teams for the season.

Is club soccer a big deal in South Africa?

Clubs soccer is very structured. We play in the Rand Central Local Football Association understanding that South Africa is separated into Regions, much like here in the US. Club soccer is very big in these regions; people compete in leagues from U6 through seniors. Clubs are very structured and very organized some with operating budgets of 2 million rand (~14 Million US dollars).

Where does South Africa Rush Fit in the grand scheme of things in South African soccer?

We will be in the middle slots. We concentrate more on development: technical skills and touches on the ball. For us it is not about winning in the junior leagues, it is about getting the players developed. When they get to U13's then we start to compete. With the Rush organization now, we are going to be very elitist with our selection of U13-U17's where we want to compete at the next level.

How does being part of Rush help you take the next step?

Having the connection to the organization is a big draw for players. The potential to be selected to go and play in the States, go to college, etc will hold us in good standing with the players.

Where do you hope to see South Africa Rush five years from now?

Five years from now I plan to own a national first division team, (1 league lower than top division) we'll have made several trips to the US, have a few players into the Colorado Rush Academy and also to have several players into college programs. As a club in SA, I'd like to see us in the same standing as I remember Rush being when I first encountered the club 10 years ago. Displaying professionalism and really leading the way for all of South Africa.

Where do you see Rush Africa going in the coming years?

It was amazing to learn how big it has gotten. As a group we can go far. What we want to do is create an Africa Rush where we can hold tournaments. The presidents of the various Rush clubs in Africa would manage it. We would get together every two years and hold mini Festivals, select teams from those and then bring those teams to the US the following year to compete in the US Rush Festival held each summer. At that point, those players gain some exposure to Rush coaches in the states that may be interested in having our players join their club. We want to make Rush Africa as big as possible in the hopes of someday having full recognition by CAF (Governing body in Africa).

During your visit to the States, you've got to see how the club operates. What kind of things will you take home and try to implement in South Africa?

Well most importantly, the way that the Technical Directors of the club work with their Directors of Coaching. Between Omar Sise and myself, we might look at the manuals and re-write them to suit Africa Rush. We want to keep the Rush Way of coaching but fine tune it and make it African so it suits us.

You had the chance to spend about one week working closely with members of Rush Soccer and staff from Colorado Rush. What have you gained during your stay?

10 years ago I coached a team that played a Rush Nike team and I was amazed by how professional they were. Getting involved with the Rush, it is easy to see why the club has grown so big. It is because they are committed to development, they are very very professional at what they do. I have a passion for this game and consider myself to be a professional, but after time here, I see that there is still much to learn. I am going back to South Africa not to recreate Colorado Rush, but to emulate their ways and bring that professionalism to Africa. The people who work here are the most hospitable people in the world and it has been a fantastic experience.