



Last week Brian Lux (Technical Director - Caribbean, SPI) had the chance to visit [Viva Rio Black Pearls Rush](#), one of our Rush branches in Haiti. "This was an amazing experience," said Lux. "The facility, players and staff are all top notch!" There were some interesting language barriers, as all the players spoke Haitian Creole (similar to French), the coaches spoke Portuguese, and Lux spoke Spanish. "It was good practice for me to speak Spanish to the coaches, have them respond in Portuguese and then to try and communicate that to the kids in their native tongue. Football is the international language so ultimately we understood each other perfectly."

Situated just to the north of Port au Prince (the capital city of Haiti), the Black Pearls Academy sits on about 8 acres of land. Driving along the 2 lane road from the airport to the facility you will pass many shacks, piles of rubble, and vendors. The country is definitely in a state of rebuilding, but progress is being made. On the hills to the north of the road about 50,000 people are living with their families in small shacks and tents made of literally anything they can find. All of these "refugees" were displaced by the earthquake and have taken refuge on the bases of the mountains. The facility itself is an oasis in the desert. From the road it doesn't look like anything more than a fenced in compound, but on the inside its beauty is revealed.



Upon entering the main gate, you pass the school to the left and get your first view of the full size grass soccer field. South of that is a full size turf field. In the center of the complex there are 2 large houses for the coaches (3-4 bedrooms in each) and a large central building that houses the dining hall and most importantly, the over-used ping pong table! On either side of the main building there are small dorms that house 10-12 players each. Continue to the south and you will walk past the outdoor gym, swimming pool, futsal court and you will find the 8v8 grass field and the 8v8 turf field. "The setup here is incredible, I am jealous that we don't have these facilities back home," said Lux. "Viva Rio has done a great job of setting these kids up for success."

The coaches scout players from all over the island to join the academy. Technical Director Rafael Novaes Dias said that players earn their way into the academy based solely on ability, not socio-economic background. From the scouting of the players at the academy, there are 5-10 players that could join Rush clubs at the highest level and make an immediate impact. The academy has a full time coaching and support staff, including a physio, GK coach, cooks and security. "This is a branch in the Caribbean that is leading the way in player development. The opportunities these kids have here are amazing!" exclaimed Lux.



During Coach Lux's visit, [The World Cup Project](#)

was filming a documentary on the facility and their association with Rush. The film will profile the academy and some of its players, focusing specifically on a young girl named Martha. Martha is from the poorest and most dangerous part of the city, a neighborhood called Soleil. Her soccer skills have earned her a way into the academy and afforded her the chance to grow as a player and attend school. "The interview and filming for the documentary was a great experience, and seeing the kids in her neighborhood while we were there was great. Martha was a local celebrity, and she beamed with pride as we snapped photos of her walking around her streets," explained Lux.

"I am honored to have this group as part of our Rush family," said Lux. "I plan on working with them very closely, and look forward to my next visit. Muito obrigado to all my friends in Haiti, I will see you all again soon!"

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View of the dorms on the right	U17 Black Pearls pre-game
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Coach Lux training the U13s	"Rock", the academy's youngest player at 11 showing off his juggling skills in his new Rush uniform
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Coaching Staff with Martha and crew from The World Cup Project	Martha on the futsal court where she was discovered in her neighborhood