



PERFORMANCE GOALKEEPING

GOALKEEPING SIMPLIFIED

PGK NEWSLETTER January 2008

Issue 1: Q&A with Tony DiCicco

What do you expect the biggest change will be in goalkeepers from the original WUSA and when the new league starts next year?

I am not expecting a great deal of change...we had excellent goalkeepers in 2001 at our last launch. There were world class keepers such as Briana Scurry; Bente Norby (Norway); Karlsson (Sweden) and an excellent group of USA keepers such as Siri Mullinix; LaKeyisia Beene; Jamie Pagliarulo; Tracy Ducar; Saskia Webber and others. This time around...there are some outstanding collegiate and YNT or WNT pool keepers that will fill the goalkeeper needs in the league.

As much as people try to suggest that the goalkeeper position is always changing...there have been very few major changes in technique or tactics over the past 20 years. Probably most have been brought on by the new ball being used which is more lively... moves more and requires advanced parrying skills.

What do you feel are the biggest challenges for the young US goalkeepers as they progress from the US College game to the professional game in the US, Europe and the rest of the world?

When our keepers...it may be a bit different for the men and women...move onto a playing environment outside our country...they learn a lot of lessons. First...players overseas are playing for their livelihood...this is their way to a better life. They are not college graduates so they, I think...especially on the men's side...put more of themselves into the effort. If they don't make it, they don't have a college education to fall back on.

From a technical - tactical standpoint...the game is faster and more sophisticated for the

men and at the very least more sophisticated for our women. They are now in a college culture and the players are smarter. The winger will serve the ball right on the head of the attacking player much more often than her American counterpart...BECAUSE...she is expected to.

Clearly...playing in MLS and playing in most European leagues there are 3 or 4 teams of players fighting for that first 11 and there isn't nearly the difference between them as we experience here.

In your time coaching male and female goalkeepers what do you think has been the biggest change in the game?

The ball is changing the game...the way it moves, there are technical and tactical adjustments that goalkeepers need to make. Also, training methods for goalkeepers are getting better all over the world. In the past, Americans treated goalkeeping more as a specialty and trained it as such more than many European teams...even pro teams. The game at the highest level totally dismisses goalkeepers that are not clearly over 6' tall.

(cont.)



TONY DiCICCO

At the Women's Final Four at College Station, TX we caught up with Tony DiCicco, head coach for the Boston Breakers, World Cup winner and Olympic Gold medalist coach. We asked him a few questions on goalkeeping.



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Issue 1: Q&A with Tony DiCicco (cont.)

They are looking for the 6'5" goalkeeper. I don't totally agree with this because there are outstanding goalkeepers that use quickness and courage and smarts to keep the ball out of the net. Shay Givens for Newcastle is an example.

And how has the American goalkeeper adapted to these changes?

American goalkeepers have adapted by becoming solid soccer players before they became goalkeepers. For the rest of the world this has always been the case but here in American... we have goalkeeper specialists when they are young and they lose something that comes back to haunt them later on in their development. We are seeing less of this but still...specialization of goalkeepers comes too early in America.

You've been named the head coach for the Boston Breakers of the new women's professional league, and are currently coaching SoccerPlus Connecticut of the WPSL. Considering the vast number of womens' teams in the WPSL, the USL's W-League and college soccer, do you think the pool of talented American players is as deep as ever?

Yes...there may be less incredible stars such as Mia Hamm; Julie Foudy; Brandi Chastain; Joy Fawcett etc. etc....but I think the pool is deep. Having said this...one of the things we learned the first time around was that W-League and WPSL players really did not understand what is meant to be a full-time pro player and it took them a year to get to that level. The jump in playing level from year 1 to year 2 in the WUSA was dramatic...we will likely see the same thing this time around.

In addition to your National Team and professional coaching, you're the technical director for SoccerPlus youth club in Connecticut. How can club and ODP teams prepare youth players to succeed in college soccer, in a professional league and on an international stage?

I am very proud of our youth club SoccerPlus FC. We coach and educate the total child. We serve as role models as well as coaches. What is neat is that other clubs are seeing what we are doing and trying to emulate some of our leadership and mentoring programs...this is good because the standard of coaching and teaching is going up largely because of our club.

Our teams are not the best in every age group but clearly in the younger age groups...the players we have had early in their development...our teams are the best on the field and we are continually trying to set the standard for off the field mentoring and teaching.

When educating GK coaches, what areas do you feel need to be emphasized the most and what are the biggest weaknesses you see in our goalkeeping coaches in the US?

American goalkeepers do not read the game well enough...this is because we are still not in a soccer culture (just compare the number of hours of football or basketball shown on TV and soccer). Our goalkeepers still are not consistently good soccer players as well as goalkeepers. These are the two big areas where we are still lagging behind.

We want to thank Tony for his time and commitment to goalkeeping. We wish him all the best in the future.

TONY DiCICCO