



Center for the Study of the Southwest Texas State University San Marcos

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To be a Player Coach

For my interview, I chose to speak to a Coach for the Romulans soccer team in Austin.

The Romulan team is an above 40 year old team, the Coach that I interviewed (Rudy Herrera), also has played for this team. The unique part of this interview is that the Coach, even though he has been playing for this team over the past few years, did not start playing soccer until his 40's. He had never really been drawn to soccer until his son started to play; watching his son play is what eventually caused him to get started, because he enjoyed the idea of running "with a purpose." Throughout high school Rudy was in track, he ran the mile, and due to the fact that he enjoys running, soccer seemed like an enjoyable sport.

Since Rudy's soccer career got started at a later age for him than most other soccer players, it gives us an interesting opportunity to observe what was going on in the world during this time that could also have affected his decision to join a soccer team. He joined 22 years ago, so

around the year of 1995. During this year, the Women's Fifa World Cup was just going through their second tournament ever in Sweden. 2 This may not have been something that was breaking headlines but it would definitely get more people (in this case, girls) more involved with the sport. 3 It could be assumed that since Rudy was watching his son play soccer, there were other aspects going on in the soccer world such as the World Cup that could have also caused a spark of interest. Also, during 1995, the MLS was attracting investors from other Major League, and more popular, sports from around the nation. With these new investments, the popularity of the MLS grew substantially, more media coverage of the sport, as well as watching his son play probably caused large amounts of interest from many American's to soccer. 4

With playing soccer, comes with many obstacles. As seen in the past of all sports, injuries have plagued many players, sometimes affecting their whole career in their respective sport. Rudy always enjoyed running as said before, and always felt that he was more in shape than the other players, despite being older. But due to five knee surgeries in the past 22 years it has caused him to slow down in terms of his participation. These injuries are the reason that he has decided to retire, which is something else we see in professional sports; once a player ages and accumulates injuries their participation decreases and the idea of retirement increases. 5

Other obstacles, in the case of a coach, are not always physical; Rudy explained that some of the hardest things he has done as a coach are evenly distributing playing time amongst players. He said that it is for fun, but players still want to win games, so often times he has to play players more that are better against the better teams, and players who are not as talented more against the bad teams. Many coaches have had to go through similar difficulties, and it is not easy for them to make these decisions. Often times coaches have to address the team at the beginning of the season and talk about how players need to earn playing time, but since this league is for above 40 players, people are there more for fun than competition. So even though the team wants to win, the priority is making sure everyone is involved in making that happen. As someone who has coached kids, I completely understand the difficulty in having to put the best team on the field but also trying to make sure the involvement of every player is distributed evenly.

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