



My childhood and adolescence are defined by many events and occurrences. Some of these involved church, others school, and some simply lying in bed at night, thinking about life. Nothing, though, has defined who I am more than my youth soccer career. It has been part of my life since I was nine years old, and the Idaho Rush Soccer Club provided competitive teams and coaches who were willing to pass on their knowledge and support me through my endeavors on and off the field.

As a 9-year-old, I was introduced to the world of club soccer through unusual circumstances. I began my youth career as a U11 play-up on another local club. However, due to internal drama, my teammates Nick Davey and Garrett Jones, and I decided to follow our coach to his new club FC Boise. There we would start our own legacy. Coach Brian DenHerder helped me to develop the basic skills I needed to progress as a soccer player and taught me much of what I know. After my U12 season, a new opportunity presented itself -- a chance not only to play for another new club, but also to help define and build it. The newly formed Idaho Rush would be a club where I could make a name for myself and pave the way for others in the future.

My first Rush team was U13. Although we weren't the greatest, I loved my teammates. Coach Mark French taught me that through hard work anything could be accomplished — an attribute key to my success. I wasn't the biggest or strongest, but nobody was going to work as hard as me. I would make certain of that. Whether in victory or defeat, I played my hardest for the team. But I still wanted more. I wanted to win state championships and to dominate while doing so. I would soon get an opportunity to do just that.

In U14, Idaho Osprey merged with Rush, and the two top teams in the state banded together to create Idaho Rush Nike. With Jake "Bulldog" Wicher running the wing, Jones the maestro in the center, Davey up top finishing, and me anchoring the defense, we would be difficult to beat. Little did I know that this team would stay together all the way until the end. Coach Lee Riley helped fuse our two groups together and build a core of players that would last through U18. Lee increased my tactical understanding and taught me to believe that even a small team from Idaho could compete with the best. We proved our worth on many occasions, spoiling the fortunes of over-confident teams across the West and beyond. Lee brought our team up from nothing, and readied us for the

road ahead.

During U16 we were introduced to a different breed of coach. From Bayer Leverkusen in Germany came Coach Jens Haustein. Jens had run a few of our practices before, but we were unaware of this man's drive for perfection. Jens allowed us to take the next step as a team and as players. He refined my raw technical and physical skills, curing my composure issues of the past. Jens showed us the importance of the system. If everyone would trust the system and do his job, we would have an opportunity to win games. On Jens' team our collective job was characterized by three words: aggressive, brave, and smart. These characteristics would define our team for three years. We were hardworking, mean, and gritty. We always had an opportunity to win in each game we played, and more often than not we came out on top. Without Jens, our team would not have won many of the games it did, and I would not be playing soccer for one of the top college programs in the country. He was not only our coach, but our friend. We wanted to win for him, and he was as much a part of the team as any player. He pushed us, he worked for us, and in his own way he loved us. I could never repay Jens for what he has done for me.

Without Idaho Rush, my youth soccer career would be less challenging, successful, fulfilling and fun. I hope Rush players in the future can continue the success our team enjoyed and go on to play college soccer. I hope that one day I can return to see Idaho Rush have a Development Academy team. This would lead to Rush teams that are even more skilled and competitive, and draw the attention of even more college coaches. I would be able to look back and say, I was on the first ever Idaho Rush team. I was a part of something new, different, and special.