

# NIFC News

*Development Through Training*

NORTHERN ILLINOIS



## Upcoming Events

### February 23<sup>rd</sup>

High School girls winter indoor training ends. Good luck in your High School seasons!

### March 16<sup>th</sup>

Indoor Winter Training ends for all teams. Enjoy your Spring Break!

### April 4<sup>th</sup>

Outdoor training for spring scheduled to begin

### April 17<sup>th</sup>

Opening weekend for IWSL (girls league)

April 17/24<sup>th</sup> NISL opening weekend (boys league)

May 27-30<sup>th</sup> Memorial Day Weekend tournament (all teams). Midwest Cup in St. Charles. More details to come!



## Defining Development by Eric Luzzi

As you probably know, our club motto at NIFC is “Development Through Training”. I wanted to take this first opportunity to write to you as a member of our club to further define and explain what this means.

First of all, Development is a LONG TERM PROCESS. There are many elements of our culture in the United States that demand immediate results. The truth is, however, that becoming very good at anything takes a long time. Research has stated that 10,000 hours of dedicated practice is required to fully master a skill. Soccer researchers have found that most professional players have touched the ball over 1 million times before they truly had “control” over the ball. At NIFC, we take a big picture view of development. By that I mean, our goal is to develop our players to be well rounded players by the time they are ready for their HS varsity team. To that end, we have created a progressive curriculum for which technical skills and tactical concepts should be focused on at each age group. There are not many clubs that have this kind of philosophical structure. We feel very good that when this philosophy is implemented by the high level of trainers that we have, that our players are placed in the best environment for development as possible.

Secondly, DEVELOPMENT AND WINNING ARE OPPOSITE TO ONE ANOTHER. At younger age groups (U14 and below), games can be easily won by having the biggest kid with the strongest leg in the back kicking it over everyone’s head and having the fastest kid on the team run it down and try to score. Unfortunately, those situations do NOTHING to develop the skills of any of the players on the team. Our goal as a club is to train our players to be comfortable and confident on the ball, and teach them to make the best soccer decisions on the field. Along the way, plenty of mistakes will be made, and they will often lead to goals for the other team. Obviously, we want all of our teams to compete and try to win, but we will not sacrifice the development of our players in the process. As coaches, as parents, and as a club we need to move toward a different standard for our success than only winning.

Third, DEVELOPMENT INCLUDES BEING EXPOSED TO ALL MULTIPLE POSITIONS ON THE FIELD. Certainly, from a statistical standpoint, most of our players would love to play only forward, and be the player that scores all the goals and gets all the glory. The reality is, however, that at the younger ages there is no way to predict what athletic attributes someone will have when they reach the age of 16-18. At the high school or college level, physical

*cont'd on page 2*

## Getting to Know Mike Boland - Boys Director of Coaching

Currently Mike is the men's assistant coach at NIU. He was the former assistant coach at William Penn University, and NAIA school located in Iowa. Prior to his college experiences he was

the former assistant coach at Carmel High School in Mundelein.

Mike holds an NSCAA National License and was a former all-conference player at Saint Mary's

University (MN).

Besides the Boys Director of Coaching Role with NIFC Mike is currently working with the U11 and HS boys teams.



## Getting to Know Jason Burr—Girls Director of Coaching

Currently Jason is the women's assistant coach at NIU. He was the former assistant coach at Arkansas State University and Illinois State University. Prior to that he was the Head Coach at Thomas More College (KY) and formerly Asst.

Director of Coaching at Central Illinois Select Soccer Club.

Jason holds a US Soccer Federation "B" License and was a former all-conference player at Lindsey Wilson College and Mid-Continent University. In addition to the

Girls Director of Coaching Role with NIFC Jason is currently working with the U15 and U17 girls teams.

### Defining Development Continued

attributes often are a big factor in what position a player plays (for instance, a player who is 6'3" and of average speed would likely be a central defender more than a forward or outside midfielder). If we were to only expose this player to one position based on their attributes as a 10 year old, we would ultimately be doing them a disservice when they do reach their physical maturity.

Finally, DEVELOPMENT INCLUDES MORE THAN JUST SOCCER FACTORS. As coaches, we often talk about a "professional" mentality. With 99% of players, their intangibles will be more critical to their success or failure than their talent. Obviously, we don't expect our 8-12 year olds to have the mindset of a pro. But, we do expect them to start to understand the importance of these attributes:

- Having a good work ethic at practice and in games
- Being respectful of coaches and teammates at practice and in games
- Understanding that any athletic endeavor is competitive by nature, and be willing to compete hard every time you step on the field
- Being strong enough to take constructive coaching criticism at times
- Embracing all practice activities (even the technical exercises which are not always as fun as playing games or practicing shooting), and understanding that the coaches have chosen each activity based on what the players NEED rather than what they may want

Hopefully this has clarified some of the important factors that we, as a club, consider when we set out to develop our players. In the next issue, I will go into more detail on our club's technical and tactical plan for overall development that I mentioned earlier in this article.

**Noteworthy News - Be on the lookout for upcoming information about new uniforms for the 2011-2012 Season. So, if you are on the fence about buying new pieces to the current uniform for the last session you might want to hold off if you can.**