

New Club Soccer Coach Focuses Men on Road to National Championship

By Adam Hodges

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Ask any member of the CU Men's Soccer Club their goal and you'll hear "to win the National Championship." Last November, the men traveled to Georgia only to see their chances for a National Championship slip away in the tournament's first round. BYU, a team that had recently changed status from a varsity to club program and that the Buffs had battled to a 0-0 tie in BYU's stadium earlier in the season, went on to win that tournament.

The sixteen returning players from last year's CU team are itching for another chance to prove their potential and new head coach Steve Swanger is joining the organization with exactly that goal in mind.

"We want to bring home the National Championship," says Swanger. "That is our top goal." Swanger and the Buffs are already taking the first steps down the road to next fall's national tournament in Texas. With the arrival of spring comes the arrival of a base building phase for the players. Swanger believes in conditioning soccer players like any other endurance athlete and trail runs are a common conditioning tool in Swanger's repertoire. "If we go into every game as the fittest team, we already have an immeasurable advantage," says Swanger.

Swanger's goals for this team go beyond this year's National Championship, though. He is keen on building a program that will act as a springboard for developing players. "I want to take players who didn't have a shot at the big university programs and give them a chance to reach their potential," says Swanger.

These sentiments echo from Swanger's own background as a young player looking for the right situation in which to hone his soccer skills. He started off playing at the University of North Carolina for a year before moving to D.C. to train with the Washington Stars of the American Soccer League.

He soon learned that the place to be for soccer was South America and he went to Chile with two key Spanish phrases memorized, "I want to play soccer. Where can I find a team?"

In Chile, Swanger lived with the family of a referee and was introduced to the coach of a local professional team. Swanger scored two goals in his first game and was offered a contract. After a year and a half, he moved to Bolivia to play before returning to the States during a player strike. Back in the States, he finished his degree at CU and played on the All Army Team for a season.

Swanger wants to develop a club with depth that goes beyond the fifteen players on the first team. "We want to create opportunities to see as many players as possible," says Swanger. And with his contacts in South America, Russia, and Costa Rica, Swanger hopes to provide that springboard for players who wish to continue on in the world of soccer.

Look for a fit group of Buffs to leave an indelible mark on the national soccer scene. For more information on the CU Men's Soccer Club, call the Club Sports office at 303-492-5274.

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