



## SEVERINIS SOCCER EXPERIENCE IN ARGENTINA – JULY 2010



My son Nicholas and I arrived in Buenos Aires on a cold and rainy Saturday morning during the week of the World Cup Finals. We originally planned the trip with the hopes that Argentina would be in the semi-finals and go on to win the final. Everywhere we stopped people were talking soccer and lamenting the team's elimination in the quarter-finals. The team's losing crushed the hopes of a nation looking to win another World Cup title.

Our two-week trip was planned with the idea to spend time visiting with family, friends (from my playing days) and enjoying "talking" soccer in a country that is soccer-crazy all the time not only during the world's biggest soccer tournament.

The next day we met for lunch with my long-time friend and former teammate, Angel Felix, who is now the Assistant Coach at Club River Plate (one of the most popular and well-known teams in the world). We spent several hours talking about the game of soccer around the world discussing the latest techniques in coaching and training for both youth and pro players. He invited us to attend a practice the next day. We were excited to be able to visit River's famous "El Monumental" Stadium complex.

Later that afternoon we found ourselves watching the World Cup Final (Spain vs Netherlands) in the famous restaurant called "Locos por el futbol" (Crazy about soccer). This restaurant features a dining hall where soccer fans can eat and watch soccer games from around the world on a giant screen. It was totally amazing to see the exuberant crowd of different nationalities cheering on the two teams. At the end of the game celebrating fans descended on the famous "Obelisco" (a smaller replica of the Washington Monument) in downtown Buenos Aires.

On Monday morning we got up early, breakfasted on delicious café con leche and medialunas (croissants) before leaving for the ½ hour taxi ride to River Plate. On arrival, we met with Coach Angel Cappa (another old friend from my playing days) and who is in his first season as their new head coach. We spent the next few hours observing the practice which included lots of technical work, small group possession games, and finally ended with a full-sided scrimmage game between the starters and the substitutes. Afterward we toured the rest of the club facilities and saw their trophy case which was quite impressive.

Our next destination was Bahia Blanca, a city of 500,000, located 600 kilometers (an 8-hour ride) south of Buenos Aires along the Atlantic Ocean. We traveled by car and had a lot of time to think about our next stop – Club Liniers, where I first started my career as a soccer player at the age of 15.

At Liniers we had the opportunity to be involved with the U-14/15 boys' teams. We ran several practices and we spoke with the Director of Coaches, Guillermo Puliafito, who explained that the program

identifies youth from around the southern part of the Argentina and brings them in to live and train at the club.

By mid-week we met with Jorge Solari, a former Argentine National team player. He is now the Director of Club Renato Cesarini Soccer Academy and was running local tryouts looking to discover and sign up talented young players. We met with Coach Solari several times both on and off the field and we learned a lot about his Academy and his training techniques and philosophy.

On our return to Buenos Aires we met with Vincente Cayetano Rodriguez who was an assistant coach to the famous World Cup Coach Cesar Menotti (WC champion 1978). Mr. Cayetano is now Director of the Reserve Program for Club Independiente (Nat'l Div 1 pro team). We spent hours discussing his training techniques and tactics and how he identifies players to enter the training program.

Our last stop was to meet with Julio Santella (a former teammate from Club Estudiantes de la Plata). Julio is now the Director of the Physical Trainers Program of the well-known BOCA Juniors Soccer Club. We met him at their training facilities near the airport and spent several hours talking about the important aspects of conditioning and fitness training (incl. speed training & weight training) for young players (at around the age of 14-15).

Throughout our stay in Argentina we met with many excellent coaches and trainers and we traveled through small towns and larger cities where thousands of youngsters play the game day after day on dirt fields, without the latest soccer clothing or cleats, but always with the dream to become the next Lionel Messi (FIFA World Player of the Year, currently playing in Barcelona).

Our two weeks flew by quickly and with all that we did see and do, there were many opportunities that time would not allow. Overall, we had a fantastic trip and learned many new ideas while meeting lots of old and new friends who love the game of soccer as much as we do.

Looking back on our visit we are thankful for the opportunities we had to expand our soccer knowledge by meeting with coaches and trainers that are the best in the world. We are now looking forward to being able to share what we learned with other coaches and all our players here.

Since our return we've jumped right into what we like to do best... being out on the soccer fields working with boys and girls who also love the game of soccer.

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