

Osprey Observer Article

Valrico Resident Brings Soccer Stardom to Local Club

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Reading name Derek Smethurst or his occupation as director of training for the Valrico Youth Soccer Club may not mean much to most people in the Brandon area or in Florida or simply this part of the world. But what if you found out that Smethurst to soccer is like Michael Jordan to Basketball? Well that might make many want to read on.

Smethurst who now provides professional coaching and training for the Valrico Soccer Club working directly with the select teams on a weekly basis and who directs clinics and training for all the teams and coaches as well as provides the basis for instruction which helps the young players excel at all levels of competition is not only a blessing but a privilege to have in the community.

Making his debut into professional soccer in South Africa at the age of 18 with his first kick inside of 12 seconds, Smethurst had scored his first pro goal and went on to score 3 goals on his debut. He became one of South Africa's greatest goal scoring forwards. While in South Africa he won 4 Championships, but there was more to come.

In 1968 he joined Chelsea F.C. (now English Premier League) leading him to be a part of one of the best teams in history. In 1970 Chelsea won the FA Cup and then went on to win the European Cup Winners Cup against Real Madrid, where Smethurst scored the goal in the semi final putting Chelsea through to the finals and on to victory. He won his fifth championship with Chelsea from 1968 – 1971.

In 1975 he became the Rowdies' all time leading goal scorer with 57 goals in 65 games with an NASL goal tally of 75 goals in just over 100 games (in baseball terms he batted .750). The subject of many books - (one of which is) Soccer Super Stars (Goldstein and Wohl) he is a main feature with Pele, George Best, Franz Beckenbauer and Eusebio.

"These guys were the best players of my time and I am proud to have had a chance to play with them as well as against them," Smethurst proudly said.

Smethurst' knowledge of soccer has prompted the world famous Pele to speak of him as an expert in knowing how to find space and how to use the correct techniques.

"These are the same two principles that are getting scholarships and championships for our students today," Smethurst said adding, "The push and move technique is something that we have been able to perfect here which in turn led the our players to be as successful as they now are. No one can keep up with us only try to copy."

Smethurst's talent can also be found on the pages of a number of books he has published the first of which found its way onto the bookshelf in 1994. He is the author of the SOCCER FOR WINNING SERIES (Reedswain Publishing - reedswain.com). The first three of these cover techniques, offense and practice while the fourth soon to hit the stores deals with defense.

A fifth book is also planned to be published later which will give insight into the politics of the sport and will deal with the ups and downs players face during their athletic careers.

Interestingly, Smethurst explained that the most important thing his young players are being taught is not the techniques or how to score the most goals, but he said, "I teach these kids to learn and reflect on each game and to win with dignity and lose with grace."

For more information about Derek Smethurst or the Valrico Youth Soccer Club please visit

www.valricosoccer.com.