

ESI NEWSLETTER

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A BOLD & UNIQUE VISION FOR PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

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GYUWON CHONG: SHOOTING FOR THE PROS

For Gyuwon Chong the goal is simple -- reach the highest level of professional soccer that he can. The European Soccer Institute alumnus currently plays left and right wing in the Sporting Kansas City Academy Program. He acknowledges his experience at ESI with coach Stéphane Auvray was the launching pad for his soccer career.

“ESI helped me become aware of what soccer really is and helped me understand the game in different situations very clearly,” Gyuwon said.

He credits his time at ESI for teaching both the physical and mental aspects of what is needed in a professional environment. Stéphane’s intense core work, technical work and drills were both physically and mentally challenging, increasing Gyuwon’s ability to both think fast and perform well on the field.

“Where I play right now requires fast paced thinking and moving,” said Gyuwon. “ESI really helped me to think more quickly.”

Gyuwon also believes his experience with ESI was the foundation for developing a focused mentality and approach for every game and each individual training session. It’s this hard-working approach he believes sets him apart from his peers. “On the field, I’m dominant and always try to give defenders the worst day I can possibly give them.”

This intrinsic motivation has also kept him on top of his game during the Covid-19 confinement. “I have a workout to do every day from our team’s trainer and Zoom sessions two days a week, so I do that and also train with a friend or two to keep ourselves challenged, fit, and to continue to get better,” he said.

Gyuwon's commitment to soccer is self-initiated. “I used to go out every single day and put cones and ladders to work with all day or even just to juggle for two hours, not even realizing it was hard work because I just loved doing those things.”

It is this love of the sport that helped him remain focused since he started playing the game at age 11.

“[Soccer] gave me a dream to pursue and that makes me think about what I do every day,” he said. “ESI was the change I needed to truly bring out the best of me and my potential. I learned and trained in an environment where I was exposed to many new things and even new ways of doing things that I thought I already knew all about.”



Gyuwon Chong



When it comes to achieving his dream, Gyuwon’s family has always been beside him and that has made it all the more meaningful.

“They are the most supportive people who always push each other, not just me, in what we each love doing most. Their support helped me a lot to get to where I am, and it has been the only factor to being the best I can be, ever since I started playing soccer.”



ESI was the change I needed to truly bring out the best of me and my potential.



PARENT HIGHLIGHT: DANIEL CHONG

For ESI alumnus Gyuwon Chong, soccer brings the whole family together. Everyone lends their support in his pursuit to reach the highest level he can, but no one offers more support than his father, Daniel, who sees numerous benefits from ESI's program paying off for his son.

Daniel recognized Gyuwon's talent early while his son played in Korea. He says that Gyuwon's first coach was impressed by his physicality and mental energy--two qualities Gyuwon has been able to continue to cultivate while playing for ESI and now Sporting KC's Soccer Academy.



This is one of the reasons Daniel sees value from his son's experience at the program. "ESI would never make their players dislike soccer," he says, a testament to dedication made to each player, the creative and custom curriculum, and Stéphane's ability to help each player set unique long-term goals.

Daniel also credits ESI for training players with techniques that transform them above local competitors, focusing on methods that are true to international standards. "If you want your kid to play not like American soccer, come and see ESI," he said. "ESI's style was unique among American clubs and more likely to be similar to what Gyuwon experienced in Korea. The kids around Gyuwon were learning such a unique philosophy of ESI, which was a favorite part of ESI for us."



Daniel Chong

Throughout all of his son's soccer experiences, Daniel has noticed how ESI excels at being extraordinarily focused on creating team chemistry as well as the strong relationship between coach and player.

Ultimately, Daniel is most proud of his son's ability to score goals, be a great team player, Gyuwon's mastery over the game's fundamentals (like dribbling and passing), and his ability to remain confident. He believes his son learned an incredibly valuable lesson at ESI for on and off the field. And that is - "Be a good person first."

Daniel first learned of ESI from a friend and after several exchanges with Stéphane, Gyuwon was enrolled and practicing with his new teammates. Daniel quickly noticed the Institute's development of player commitment and passion for the game, not even just from the players, but from the other ESI parents as well. He also got a better sense of Stéphane's coaching.

"He was always trying to be connected to the kids even emotionally as a good friend and advisor," Daniel said. He noted that Stéphane also remained patient with each player as they developed. This connection made a huge impact on Gyuwon, allowing him to elevate his game and so he could play any position on the field.



ESI's style was
unique among
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clubs...

INSIDE THE INSTITUTE

STAYING ACTIVE DURING COVID-19

ESI players are committed to their own improvement, even in uncertain times like these. The team hasn't had the opportunity to practice together since their return from Guadeloupe in March, but under Stéphane Auvray's guidance, each player has taken steps to continue their own development at home.

"I am definitely very proud of our players mindset, dedication and most of all passion for the game," Stéphane said.

Beginning at the end of March, Stéphane sent players weekly programs that combined technical work, core work and video analysis. Over the course of each week, the players participated in planking, stretching, ball mastery, and other drills, as well as offering their peers advice on areas to improve. Each player's program was specifically tailored to them based on building and recovery, and to help avoid injuries or fatigue.

As a way to continue their technical improvement, Stéphane created two juggling charts and challenged his players to work their way through them. Many of the players' juggling videos can be seen on ESI's Youtube page. Stéphane also asked players to watch game footage and record their own analysis and self-reflection of their play.

"We turned our focus mostly to individual improvement," Stéphane said. "If the program is properly followed the players will maintain a good fitness level and will improve."

Stéphane's program shows his unique dedication to his players and their continued growth. It shows how ESI is making the best of the situation. While players practice at home alone, weekly Zoom meetings keep the team connected and allow for some much needed social time.

"With the players we communicate via text messages on both teams group chats or individually," Stéphane said. "No one is obliged to communicate with me, but for the players who do, it has helped me to know that they are involved and follow the program."

While Stéphane and his current players look forward to resuming team play in June, ESI looks to grow with tryouts. The players themselves know that the training that they put in will ensure they are more than ready to return to the pitch once confinement is behind them.

**Check Out ESI's Dedication to Improvement
on Our YouTube Channel!**



PLAYER CORNER: TRAINING FOR SUCCESS

Owen Hubbard has dreams of playing professional soccer in Europe and believes his training with the ESI 05/06 team will help him get there. He's been with ESI for close to seven years, and in that time, he's had the opportunity to travel to France twice and Guadeloupe once.

"These international experiences are unique because you can compare yourself with different players across the world," Owen said.

He also cited his participation in the international Futsal Tournament in Florida as a memorable highlight. At this futsal event he was privileged enough to meet and greet the reigning Futsal World Cup manager and gain insight through a Q&A session. These experiences, plus the day-to-day training, have made his time at ESI special and created a measuring stick for player advancement that will allow him to not just dream of being a professional soccer player, but make those dreams a reality.

"ESI is helping me reach my goals by pushing me to be as good as I can be as long as I put in the work," Owen said about the Institute. At the backbone of his soccer success is Stéphane's training. "What makes Stéphane a good coach is that he is able to get the most out of his players through his ability to keep training both challenging and demanding."

During this time of confinement, Stéphane has taken steps to ensure that his players can continue developing their skills. "I have been following Stéphane's training that he sends out," Owens said, knowing that there might be a period of adjustment when the players get back together. "I think this could affect how we play for a couple weeks--figuring out how to play together again--but I don't think it will take long to be back to normal because of the training he sends us."

Like his teammates, the lessons Owen continues to learn at ESI go beyond the field of play and are foundational to making a great first impression in every aspect of life. "A common but important life lesson that I learned while playing soccer at ESI is to always introduce yourself and be polite because you never know what opportunities will result from an exchange."

Owen is future focused in his approach to the game. He's learned to prepare for games by visualizing himself on the field, and it has translated to success. He's most proud of his goal against France's Stade Rennais, because it proved that his experience at ESI has prepared him to compete with international players his age.

Owen has a great piece of advice for those players training and playing with ESI - "Put in work outside of practice because Stéphane will give you the training, but it won't do as much good if you don't work outside of practice."



ESI INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

GUADELOUPE TRIP 2020

In early March, ESI's teams invaded Guadeloupe, France for its 5th year of international partnership with French Football Federation programs of Pôle Espoir Guadeloupe (U14 and U15) and the Centre Élite des Régions Françaises d'Amérique CERFA (U16 to U18).

As it is every year, player and parent enthusiasm was off the charts for this trip to France's tropical paradise! From the players anticipating the upper level challenges of soccer competition – to the parents looking forward to improved weather, French cuisine and breathtaking scenery – everyone was equally energetic for the excitement of this soccer experience.

The Butterfly Island had the same sun, beautiful seas and sand as in year's past, and the backdrop for the week was carrying the patterns of each prior visit. The expectant daily bus rides to and from the soccer facility. Everyone setting up residence at Crystal Beach with the beauty of being near the water coupled with local, Caribbean flair. The same awesome promise held true – with ESI players enjoying complete immersion in an environment with France's top upcoming players that were integrating into youth Academies in France and other countries in Europe.



This year ESI's 03/04 and 05/06 teams practiced at different times. The players biggest concerns were typical - ensuring they had hydration, proper nutrition and sunblock to get them through their intense sessions. ESI players enjoyed competing and partnering with French players in agility challenges and scrimmages. French and US players reunited from years prior in a fashion that is unique and an opportunity that only ESI can provide – international competition, lifelong connections, and a chance to drastically raise the caliber of play.

Parents, families and players used down time for walks along the beach, trips to the market, and visiting gorgeous tourist attractions like Pointe des Châteaux, the waterfalls in the Guadeloupe National Park and shopping in the marina and market.

By the end of the first week of the originally planned 10-day trip in paradise, the event was met with profound uncertainty as the Covid-19 Pandemic steered the trip down a path untraveled. Players continued mixing morning beach sessions of technical work, core work and stretching, with sight-seeing when possible, getting creative in gathering as the standards of public connecting were changing hour by hour.

Then on March 12, the French President Emmanuel Macron announced that all schools and sporting events would be canceled effective the upcoming weekend. This resulted in March 13 being the last practice at Pole Espoir for ESI players. Meanwhile back home, schools in Kansas and Missouri were closing down for months and public health officials were declaring a state of emergency.

ESI families modified travel plans and expedited trips home to prepare for lockdown. Guadeloupe, known as an island with active markets and popular marinas, began to set restrictions on travel and restaurant hours. While there was a stop on all soccer, the rainbows and sunsets continued to display a beauty that could not be restricted or filtered, even by a pandemic.

The ESI players experienced, as coach Stéphane Auvray said, "exceptional circumstances" this year, but the trip was not without benefits. The players who went not only received additional training but are bound by a historical account and international, epic experience for the rest of their lives. Everyone was fortunate not to catch the virus and while in quarantine each had much to look thoughtfully back on. This is a memory that, like the gifted French players at Pole Espoir, challenged ESI players, and showcased their adversity and personal development – both in the game of soccer – and the game of life.

INSIDE THE INSTITUTE

PLAYER CORNER: DEEP PASSION & FOCUSED COMMITMENT

Soccer runs deep with ESI's 03/04 Beau Ricard. His passion for the sport was first planted while watching matches with his dad while growing up. Just as he was a fast fan of the game, he's an equally enthusiastic player and it shows through his competitive style on - and focused training off - the field. Beau joined ESI in 2014, and acknowledges the tremendous growth in his abilities and experience he's seen over the years.

His absolute flexibility and versatility in playing anywhere on the field showcase his technically sound soccer. Early on he was a striker with ESI and then moved to the left and right wings. From there he has played midfield, center back, as well as left back and right back.

"There hasn't been a single position I haven't played under Stéphane, although right now I'm playing right back and center back," Beau said.

Beau's extensive abilities have allowed him to travel the world with soccer on the wings of ESI. He has had 9 soccer experiences where he traveled out of the US; playing in France (3 times), Guadeloupe (4 times), as well as Costa Rica and Columbia.



"ESI has shown me what it's like to play on another level," Beau said. "Playing in areas like France, Guadeloupe, all over the United States as well has shown me the other people I'm competing with and has taught me more lessons in every aspect of my life than anything else."

Beau highlights Stéphane's extraordinary training style and guidance in playing soccer "the right way" - as aspects he never takes for

granted. "[Stéphane] has helped improve every single part of my game. I have watched him transform players into superstars. He's an amazing mentor for me. He gives me advice that no one else ever could."

This transformation and mentorship haven't come without some personal sacrifices. Beau's commitment to the sport has meant missing out of events, getting tons of sleep, and changing his eating habits, including eating "lots and lots of eggs." But for Beau, it's worth it.



"At ESI we train to reach our maximum potential as players," Beau said. "Stéphane sets standards for the players at ESI - whether it be the juggling chart or winning the league - and he trains us in what I believe is the best way possible, not necessarily for winning a game every week but to reach those big picture goals."

Beau feels that he's improved his touch, which he humbly feels may take some time to re-master after the confinement ends. He's also learned to be a better communicator, had the opportunity to travel around the world, but he's most proud of the first goal he scored for the 01/02 team--which his dad got to see and celebrate, making for a fun car ride home that day.

ESI UPCOMING EVENTS

June 1:
Commitments to Current Club

Online Registration for Potential New
ESI Players

June 19:
First Day of Tryouts