

ESI NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 04 YEAR 2020

A BOLD & UNIQUE VISION FOR PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

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ESI PLAYERS COMPETE IN SPAIN



PROUD PARENTS



WELCOME NEW ESI PLAYERS

FOLLOWING HIS GOALS: LUKE GRIFFITHS JOINS FC MALAGA CITY

Luke Griffiths, 04, has been with ESI since 2018. Now he's taking the next step to join FC Malaga City Academy in Almunecar, Spain this coming fall. Getting through the selection process wasn't easy, especially when selling and promoting your soccer talent to a program miles away. But with today's technology and a strong family support system, his resume and videos garnered interest from FC Malaga City.



Luke and teammates enjoying time at the beach in Guadeloupe.

"It's extremely difficult to get noticed, but with the platforms we have available to submit videos it has become easier," Luke says. "As much as coaches want to see players in person it is becoming more common for players to be seen and made offers from videos alone."

Luke was notified via phone call and then received an official offer letter from the academy. "I was super excited and ready to hop on a plane right then!" he said. "This has always been my dream."

He will have 10 months to make his impact in Spain and believes he has the skills to immediately do just that. Training will begin September 1, 2020 and he'll stay through May 2021. He will get Winter and Summer breaks. Before he goes, Luke is doing everything he can to prepare and feels wired for the mental challenges ahead thanks to ESI.

"ESI prepared me in the way that you have to earn to be where you want to be. There are no freebies in high-level soccer," he said. "I have focused mostly on my mindset. It might not be a physical skill, but it is indeed the most important."

Luke believes that ESI also equipped him with the collective tools that will make him competitive with his new teammates, but he also knows which skills he can improve upon as a player. "Everything," he said. "I say this because there is always room for the potential to get better in every way."

The FC Malaga City program promises a strict regimen. "I've gotten a little glimpse," he said. "Training or school most days and then Spanish classes throughout the week. About every five days we'll play a match. My classes will be aligned with the schedule I have for the day, so if we play a game in the morning school will be in the afternoon."

He also looks forward to becoming fluent in Spanish and enjoying his leisure time in a new country. "[There will be] a lot of beach time from what I've heard since Almunecar is on the water, and also trips to cities occasionally to go sightseeing."

Teammates at Home and Abroad

Despite being across the Atlantic from his family and friends, Luke won't be completely alone. Beau Ricard, another ESI player, has also been accepted to FC Malaga City's program.

"I think it's awesome because not only will I know somebody to start with there and share these experiences, but I'm very happy for Beau because he's an exceptional player, and I'm glad to see someone else from ESI pursuing their path in Europe."



Left : Luke during ESI game.
Below : Luke and teammates heading to Guadeloupe.



"ESI prepared me in the way that you have to earn where you want to be. There are no freebies in high-level soccer."



SUPPORTING THEIR SON'S DREAMS

As Luke Griffiths prepares to start his training with FC Malaga City in Almunecar, Spain, his parents, John and Brooke Griffiths, know Luke will get an invaluable life experience that will help him develop personally and as a player. By playing soccer at an extremely high level and being part of an academy system with an opportunity for trials and exposure, as well as incorporating a broader view of life personally - Luke will be able to develop into the player and person that will allow him to reach his ultimate goal.

"Since FC Malaga City plays clubs all over Spain, La Liga through the 3rd division, it will give Luke the opportunity to get noticed by those clubs' coaches with a potential for trials with those clubs," his parents noted.

The benefit is then those clubs can follow Luke until he's 18 which is when he hopes to get signed. The strength of the Malaga City team is advantageous to Luke landing a long-term commitment.

For any parent, especially in the time of Covid-19, sending a child overseas can come with mixed emotions. For the Griffiths, Luke joining FC Malaga City is exciting and emotional.

"I just have to remind myself that this is what he wants to do, and think about the amazing opportunities he'll have," Brooke said.

The opportunities are endless for Luke, and it started with his training at ESI. "ESI has allowed Luke to train at the highest level and has provided him the foundation to pursue his goals in Europe," John noted. "He has learned you have to be resilient and keep training even when he's not where he wants to be."

Even though staying at ESI would provide Luke with continued challenges in player development, Stéphane's advice to the Griffith family was to seize the chance to play in Europe.

"He should grab the opportunity because being in Europe could only help him grow even faster," Stéphane said.

One of the benefits of ESI for Luke has been the intense training environment Stéphane created, one that the Griffiths say can't be found anywhere else in Kansas City. This will support Luke as he takes on international competition.



Luke Griffiths with his parents, John and Brooke and older brother on the beach.

"[Stéphane] brings the European style of play into training with the background of what it takes to play at the highest level professionally," Luke's parents said. While their son has enjoyed ESI and benefited immensely, they too have enjoyed being a part of the ESI community.

"We will miss all the parents and players," the Griffiths stated. "We've made great friendships with the ESI families and have enjoyed the amazing experiences available with trips to Guadeloupe Pole Espoir for instance. The opportunities provided by ESI for travel and training are invaluable to the players."

Luke's dad and mom are happy to offer advice to parents who have kids with big soccer aspirations.

"I say let them go for it! If this is their dream, let them decide their path. You've only got one life and you never know where these experiences will lead with soccer or life," Brooke said.

As Luke heads off to Spain, Luke's family is also planning trips to visit their son.

"We will definitely see him play! We will see him about every two months whether we go to Spain or he comes home for break."



"[Stéphane] brings the European style of play into training with the background of what it takes to play at the highest level professionally."



JACKSON GRANT'S PATHWAY TO SOCCER SUCCESS

Jackson Grant, ESI 02, is heading to Valencia City, Spain in August 2020 after committing to a 10-month program with Eture Sports. The Eture program allows soccer players the opportunity to gain visibility while playing for European soccer teams through a year of intense soccer development. The experience with Eture will open up a variety of paths for Jackson, but his goal is to focus on becoming a professional soccer player.

"I am hoping to get professional contracts. That is my main goal. To get a contract and stay over there," Jackson said. "College is the backup plan for me."



Jackson Grant will be heading to Valencia City, Spain in Aug. 2020.

Committing Across the Miles

In late March, as the Covid-19 pandemic grew more concerning, Jackson received the news on the next steps toward his goal. The program hasn't seen him play in person, but have seen highlights and knew he was interested after speaking with coach Stéphane Auvray, which worked in Jackson's favor.

"They reached out and told me they were interested," Jackson said.

The process to his commitment included an interview and an application. He's gotten to know the club's general manager, and has remained in constant text communication with the representatives there. In April 2020, the team announced his official signing.

This won't be his first international experience. In 2019 Jackson traveled to Sweden, Norway, Denmark to play tournaments. With ESI Jackson has played throughout France, participating in the immersion in Lorient and training in Guadeloupe 3 different years. He's grateful for those opportunities and knows those experiences will help him at Eture.

"I think that I know what these coaches are expecting and the level of play of the players," Jackson said. "I have been overseas with ESI. I have played against these types of players. While others might not have

experience with that. I know what it takes and what the standard of play is."

Invaluable Lessons

For Jackson, the lessons learned at ESI are invaluable and his confidence is supported by the lessons instilled by Stéphane.

"With Stéphane I have literally played every position besides goalie," he says. "Anywhere I'm put, I can stand out. I have the knowledge and know what to do. I can use my strengths, agility, ball control. I can use my voice. I can be a leader."

Versatility is something he's developed over time at ESI. He was confident in his speed before joining ESI. Now, through his development in the ESI program over the years he's established himself as a complete teammate.

"When I came to ESI I was a good player but I only knew to use my speed as my advantage. I would push the ball and chase after it until there was nowhere else to go. Then pass it off to someone else," Jackson said. His eyes were opened to becoming a more holistic player through Stéphane's mentoring, and he realized that soccer was much more than speed. "I realized I can do more than just run."

ESI has also prepared Jackson mentally for this new challenge abroad. When he first got to ESI, he was the youngest, and he'd sit back and take notes from the older players. When his time came to step up into a leadership role, he was ready. "I can see what you are supposed to do as a good leader. ESI showed me both sides of it and knowing what to do and not to do."



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"At ESI you have the perfect balance of fun and hard work - and the whole culture everyone brings to it."

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GRATEFUL FOR ESI

What will Jackson miss most about ESI? He says the people and culture. "At ESI you have the perfect balance of fun and hard work - and the whole culture everyone brings to it."

He'll miss training under Stéphane and learning from his guidance.

"Without Stéphane, I wouldn't have what I have today," Jackson says. "I wouldn't be the person or player I am today. He teaches you important lessons on how to act off the field as well as how to play on."



ESI JOURNEY SUPPORTS SON'S GROWTH

As Jackson Grant heads off to join Eture Sports this fall in their Gap Year program, Amy Grant is confident that her son has all the tools and resources to be successful. This is thanks to ESI, the institute experiences and Stéphane Aurvray.

"Everything we did with ESI and with Stéphane was not Americanized. Stéphane has taught the kids how to be uncomfortable and live outside of the normal boundaries that they are accustomed to day-to-day," Amy said. "The international trips with ESI were



Jackson with his dad, Murphy in Guadeloupe.

culturally based. Everything we experienced involved having to learn what it was like to be in someone else's home."

This uncom-
fortability is
what causes
growth and deepens
maturity and
confidence. These

are necessary characteristics to supporting your son's road to becoming a professional athlete. Amy knows that instilling personal responsibility, independence and a big dose of analytical problem solving is what will help carry Jackson to the next level that he is shooting for.

Eture's Program

Through ESI the seeds were planted and supported by the Institute's international training opportunities, connections and thirst for being challenged and improving your game. With the Eture program in Valencia City, Spain, Jackson will be part of an approximate team of 20 players that are from all throughout the world, including Mexico, Trinidad and the United States, to name a few.

A typical day for the players will consist of training, conditioning, Spanish and classes on coaching. Players that are picked up by other clubs will play in another division on weekends. This type of system ensures Jackson has playing time. Jackson has already been selected for a Honors division.

"In the afternoon – there are divisions under Honors division," Amy said. "If they get picked up by clubs they go to the clubs in the afternoon. The weekends are defined by the clubs they get assigned to. Not all

players will get picked up by a club so then they are with Eture and Eture has their games."

Bursting the Bubble

For Amy, this experience is all about her son finding growth. "I want him to be outside of his bubble and to really grow in Spain," she says. "We've always said if you aren't not growing you aren't failing. If you are not failing you are dying. If you are dying you are not living."

Jackson's soccer growth started at ESI, training with Stéphane. "Stéphane is always teaching them about the broader spectrum of everything - on and off the field," she said. "The coolest about what Jackson did with Stéphane is that ESI gave them just enough to decide if they like it or want a lot more of it."

Amy impressed how Stéphane would use methods of coaching that were individualized and custom tailored to promote team collaboration and each player's role within it. She recalls one practice where Stéphane roped the players together. Using a rope, measuring it to the infinite detail and connecting the boys - just to ensure that they understood the importance of spacing in a game. It was sessions like this that had a profound impact on the players and also demonstrated Stéphane's ability to go to all lengths to teach the players a concept - like holding their shape.

Other life lessons that were imparted at ESI included ensuring kids understood the opportunities they were given in life and how to greet and respect others from all walks of life. These are immeasurable.

"These experiences showcased to them that you guys are pretty privileged," Amy said. And it also instilled that because they have an easier life, on the soccer field the ESI players often have to dig deeper to "find your fight!"



Jackson with his mom, Amy in France.

NEXT STEPS WITH ETURE

While she knows her son is talented, Amy thinks that Eture can give Jackson the tools he needs to continue his fight to the top of his game. "Stéphane says that Jackson has all of the skills but just needed to use them. You just need to mature somewhere." There will be plenty of time to gain maturity in Spain, especially with Eture's visibility and regimed program.

Knowing this is a big next step for Jackson and the road was never clearly defined, Amy's advice for other ESI parents who hope their children achieve similar success is, "Trust the process."



"Trust the
process."



BEAU RICARD SETS HIS SIGHTS ON SUCCESS

In August 2020, Beau Ricard will head to Spain and join FC Malaga City Academy for an intense 10-month soccer program that provides the exposure and challenges that promise growth in the sport he loves. For Beau, this is a huge step in the direction of his ultimate goal, raising the level of his game to play professional soccer.

“I want to improve every single aspect of my game,” Beau said. “My left foot, my game IQ, vision, passing, fitness - hopefully grow a little god willing - and my defense since I will most likely be playing right back.”

Continued improvements to his level of play and added exposure are what drew Beau to the program.

“I will be playing against amazing academies like Real Madrid, Barcelona and Atletico,” Beau said.



Beau was one of ESI's first players.

“Hopefully if I do really well someone will notice me and then I could even take another step towards becoming a pro.”

Process of Selection

Beau reflected on the process of getting accepted into the Academy. Emails, texts, videos and an online application are the technological tools in overseas tryouts.

“I emailed the coach back in December of 2019,” he said. “I filled out an application on their website with basic questions like my age, where I’m from, what position I play. I sent them several videos of me playing in games.”

The challenge in applying for a program like FC Malaga City is that the coaches hadn’t seen Beau play live but he was strategic in showcasing his talents. “You just have to make yourself look the best, use your best highlights and hope for the best.”

ESI’s Impact

Beau’s highlights showcased his development at ESI, and the skills he focused on to put himself in the position to travel abroad. “I believe the most important skill is work ethic,” Beau said. “If you show up to

training every single day and if you give it 100% every time you go out on the field then results will show indefinitely.”

Another challenge Beau can expect when he’s in Spain is the mental challenge, but he’s confident in his preparation. “The mental toughness I have acquired through ESI has been tremendous and very helpful to my game,” Beau said. “Whether it is making that long run from box to box to stop a goal or if it’s going to practice and working hard even when I am tired or don’t feel well sometimes.”

He also credits Stéphane Auvray with helping him develop the tools that he hopes give him an edge over his new competition. “The technique that coach Stéphane has implemented in my game for the last several years is probably the most important piece in giving me an edge. He is an elite coach who knows the ins and outs of the game and has without a doubt influenced my game the most out of anyone else, without him I wouldn’t be where I am at today.”

Reflecting on ESI

Beau is thankful for his time and development at ESI, adding that he’s been given amazing opportunities and experiences that many US-based players don’t get. He’ll miss the program and the environment.

“I have been at ESI for a really long time and it will be really weird not going to practice every day and I will definitely miss doing 5v2’s and laughing with the team or watching Champions League games before practice,” Beau said.

This next level soccer experience promises exciting adventures, and along with soccer, Beau looks forward to the nice weather and sun. While the environment will be totally new, he’s happy that along the way he picked up a little bit of Spanish, which will help ensure the language isn’t a huge barrier. “I took Spanish from preschool to 7th grade. I know a little bit, hopefully enough to get me by,” Beau said.

Both Beau and Luke Griffiths will be at FC Malaga City this coming fall. As for other ESI players who hope to go abroad, Beau has some advice:

“Never give up on your dreams. There will be days when you really don’t want to practice or you are tired, but never lose that motivation and never lose sight of the goals you have because one day, if you truly give it your all, you will receive rewards and the hard work will pay off.”



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“Never give up on your dreams.”

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ESI DEVELOPMENT IS THE FOUNDATION FOR HIS SON'S FUTURE

As his son Beau Ricard prepares to head to Spain for a ten-month program with FC Malaga City, Aaron Ricard sees the immense opportunities to continue developing the skills he gained at ESI under Stéphane Auvray's coaching.



Aaron enjoys watching his son play.

"[FC Malaga City is] more of an extended version of what Stéphane was trying to teach the boys. The opportunities and the coaching really seem to align with what Stéphane has always been about," Aaron said regarding the FC Malaga City Academy. "Their goals and aspirations are in tune with what your kid's goals and aspirations are."

Aaron believes FC Malaga's Academy is a great step for Beau, because while many kids want to go pro in Europe, it's a difficult path. The academy will provide Beau with opportunities to be seen by some of Europe's top clubs, while keeping his options open. He would still be in a position to return to the United States and play in college or within the system of Major League Soccer (MLS) as an alternate route. It will also give Beau time to focus on his craft.

"When Beau is in Spain, there will be no other distractions," Aaron said. "At the end of the day, it is only your teammates and you are 8000 miles away and all those around you are there to become professionals."

Beau traveling to Spain also presents him with the natural step in his soccer growth and will allow him to continue playing the game he loves. With COVID-19 the players have seen limited playing time and that has been difficult. ESI parents have felt this absence of soccer in their lives. With Beau moving onto FC Malaga City, Aaron will miss the camaraderie among the ESI players, and the connection built up between ESI parents.

"The biggest thing I have missed is seeing the kids play. For the last 10 years we have had practice 5 to 6 nights a week and watched soccer every night. I miss the camaraderie and just watching the ESI team," Aaron said.

Moving on from ESI can be difficult for families who have been in the program for a long time. Beau is known for being one of ESI's first players. Having history with ESI and Stéphane, Aaron has nothing but appreciation for the program and the coach.

"Stéphane is the best soccer development coach and he has taught them how to be good young men," Aaron said. "He has lived and breathed soccer every day of his life. As a professional player and as a coach. Stéphane is invested in every kid that is invested in making it."

If all goes according to plan, Beau will head to Spain at the end of August, and will be back to visit during Christmas time. Aaron knows Beau is ready for this next level because of the valuable lessons he learned at ESI. He also advises any parent considering ESI to appreciate the Institute's holistic approach to player development.

"Beau learned how to be a young man and how to respect people at ESI," Aaron said. "If you want your kid to excel at soccer and get the most out of himself - become the best he can as a young man in today's society - then ESI is the only way." If the parents and the player believe in the process Stéphane is putting forward then he will believe in you."



Beau with his grandparents, aunt and cousins.



"If you want your kid to excel at soccer and get the most out of himself - become the best he can as a young man in today's society - then ESI is the only way."



INSIDE THE INSTITUTE

WELCOME NEW PLAYERS

Our U15 & U17 players for the 2020 - 2021 season:

U15

Evan Gould

Sebastian Jara

Reece Kass

Taran Singh

Gavian Starlin



U17

Alex Tiedt

TEAM TRAINING NOTES

Important points with consideration of Covid-19:

- No more handshakes
- Greet with "Bonjour"
- Wear a mask in ESI's indoor living room
- Do not share food and drinks
- Wear futsal shoes indoor
- Training uniforms white shirt, black short, black socks
- You must bring a snack



TEAM TRAINING SCHEDULE FOR AUGUST

August 3 to 6

Monday through Thursday at Heritage Park (HP)

U15 - 8 to 9.30am

U17 - 9.30 to 11am

August 10 to 13

Monday at Blackbob Park (BP)

U15 - 8 to 9.30am

U17 - 9.30 to 11am

Tuesday through Thursday at (HP)

U15 - 8 to 9.30am

U17 - 9.30 to 11am

Starting August 18

Monday at ESI or (BP)

Tuesday through Thursday (HP)

U17 - 3.45 to 5pm

U15 - 5.15 to 6.30pm