

ESI NEWSLETTER

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A BOLD & UNIQUE VISION FOR PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

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2020 SEASON KICKOFF

ESI ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: TOMMY JERNIGAN

For any soccer player, the Major League Soccer (MLS) Academy system - like Sporting Kansas City's - is rigorous, but for Tommy Jernigan, the skills and mindset he developed at ESI have been foundational to advancing his soccer goals.

"We are lucky to live in a place that has an excellent local academy," Tommy said, speaking about SKC. "It was always my goal to make the academy, and I spoke with Stéphane about this goal. However, I did not try out or request to train with the Academy until Stéphane told me I was ready. He has worked with many players that go on to academies, and I trusted his decision completely. Once I was at Academy, I felt ready to face the competitive environment thanks to ESI."

Tommy didn't know when he would be ready for the Academy, but he understood that each day, every practice, was an opportunity to get closer to it.

"Stéphane reinforced that it does not matter how good you are today, if you give it 100% in training and playing, anything can happen," Tommy said. "In addition, I really enjoy playing soccer and even if I didn't make Academy, I would have no regrets."

Tommy, who has the distinction of playing for ESI's first-ever team, recalls it being a great place to develop his technical skills and decision making, which prepared him well for SKC.

"I have always enjoyed the mental aspect of the game," Tommy said in reference to the different ways he was able to develop while at ESI. "I used to play left mid or left defender. Stéphane often told me I pushed up more when I was a defender than a midfielder. I am good at distribution and have a strong left foot. My game has changed through time. My last year at ESI, I played central defender and developed both a solid physical presence and athleticism."

Changing positions, as it turns out, helped prepare Tommy for SKC Academy. "Having played left back and midfielder, I understood how to find passes and understand positioning in a way that really helps my game as central back. I've always been defensively minded, but learning and playing different positions was essential to my development."

Along with developing these skills, Tommy was able to travel abroad with ESI and experience soccer in other venues.

"I went to both France and Guadeloupe twice," he said. "Each time I experienced something different. My first trip to France we played in a tournament in Brest. The teams were from all over Europe. One of the games we played AS Roma. All the teams paraded through the town carrying their country's flag. We also got to tour Clairefontaine and see PSG play in the Coup de France. The beach soccer at Guadeloupe was awesome."

When he thinks back to his time at ESI, Tommy recalls what consistently helps set it apart. "The standard of training is very high. Stéphane is very focused on the details," he said.

Off the field Tommy feels that Stéphane also taught him other life lessons, mainly being respectful and the importances of sportsmanship. "Every training session we would greet Stéphane. At the end of every session, we would thank him," he said.

Since leaving ESI, Tommy has appreciated Stéphane's continued mentorship.

"It took some getting used to SKC and Stéphane shared what it was like to be a part of an academy system," he said. "He has come to some of my Academy games. Stéphane has a very focused instruction based not only on my abilities, but on his expectations of the player I can become. His experience as a professional player gives him a good perspective."

Tommy maintains regular training sessions with SKC and acknowledges that balancing school and soccer can be a challenge, but he's up to it. He knows from his experience at ESI it is important to sustain a high standard for training, and it's a standard he thinks every ESI player relates to.

"Stéphane is an excellent teacher and I really benefited from his experience as a former professional player," Tommy said. "He knows what it takes to get there and demanded a high level of training and game play that helped me in all areas. ESI helped my touch, my positioning and my knowledge of the game. ESI training pushes you to think critically."

Tommy's next steps include working toward playing soccer professionally, taking after Matt Besler and Gerard Pique, two of his favorite players. Wherever his soccer career takes him, he appreciates that his training at ESI was foundational to helping him achieve his current - and future - goals.

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“Put in the work to improve,”

Tommy said.

“Believe in the process.”

”



Tommy Jernigan

PARENT HIGHLIGHT: KELLY & STEPHANIE JERNIGAN

Kelly and Stephanie Jernigan's connection to ESI is historic. Their son Tommy was not only on the very first team ESI rostered in 2014 but was also one of the first players to do individual training sessions with ESI coach Stéphane Auvray. Fast forward to 2020 and Tommy is now an ESI alumni and has been



Tommy Jernigan plays for Sporting KC Academy.

playing for Sporting KC Academy since 2018. Tommy's hard work and Stéphane's direction and guidance provided the path for Tommy to join the local MLS Academy.

"Stéphane set up an opportunity for Tom to train with the SKC Academy," the Jernigans shared. "Tom was offered a spot on the Academy after the trial period was over. Stéphane was waiting at the Swope Soccer Complex to hear whether or not Tom made the Academy. He was the first person we told that Tom made it!"

The Jernigans attribute ESI's European academy model as well as the thorough ESI player demands to Tommy's achievements. Learning to play within ESI's system resulted in a strong technical foundation that has served him well in pursuing and achieving his soccer goals.

A key ingredient to ESI player development is the Institute's individualized curriculum. Kelly and Stephanie have always been impressed with the customized program at ESI and Stéphane's attention to player development and growth. Born out of this detail is self-analysis of performance – by the player.

"There is an emphasis on developing the individual player as well as teaching the tactical aspects of the game," Kelly said. "Players learn from their mistakes and are encouraged to think about their approach to the game. Critical thinking is a key part of Stéphane's training."

Growth on the field and through ESI's international experiences have created lifelong friendships and memories never forgotten by the Jernigans. They

have taken 4 trips overseas with ESI – 2 to France and 2 to Guadeloupe.

"All the trips overseas provided opportunities to introduce the boys to both other cultures and approaches to the game," Stephanie said. "Some of our favorite memories are of having dinner with families of the local players. You don't need to speak French when you speak the language of soccer!"

Now that their son is playing in the Sporting Kansas City Academy system, Tom is one step closer toward his goal of playing professionally. ESI taught him to focus on long-term goals and not short-term results, and Kelly and Stephanie are proud of Tom's commitment and discipline developed at ESI. These characteristics have translated very well at the Academy and will carry him well into his future – on and off the field.

Post-ESI, Kelly and Stephanie look back fondly on their son's time and appreciate the support of the system, the coach and the parents. To them, the differentiators of ESI can be summed up very simply:

"It's not a club. It's a community," they said.



The Jernigans enjoyed ESI's International opportunities.



There is an emphasis on developing the individual player as well as teaching the tactical aspects of the game.



NEW PLAYER SPOTLIGHT: TARAN SINGH

Taran Singh joined ESI's 2006 team for the 2020 - 2021 season. Taran had the benefit of watching his brother, Eshaan, practice and develop in ESI's unique environment, which made it an easy choice for Taran when it came time for soccer tryouts. After making ESI's team, the center midfielder has continued to embrace what makes ESI special - from practice, to the play on the field, to the Coach and

Technical Director, Stéphane Auvray.

"ESI has much more freedom, there is a variety of training drills," Taran said. "I get more personal attention and guidance. I feel the focus is on learning which is different from my previous club where we played to win at all cost."

He believes playing with ESI will help him

achieve his short term

goals of improving his touch and ball control, and his long term goals of playing in the Premier League and having the opportunity to represent the country on the US Men's National Team. Meeting these goals starts with hardwork and challenging himself.

"Everybody at ESI is very supportive and competitive so I get to push myself to be better," Taran said. "I love the challenges like the juggling chart, regular practice that I can't wait to go to each day."

The juggling chart is just one way Taran is benefitting from Stéphane's coaching. The temperament of his new coach and the ongoing player analysis he receives are additional aspects Taran appreciates.

"He is the best coach I have had in my short soccer journey," Taran said. "He is calm and collected at practice and at games. He connects with us and provides regular feedback. We are all accountable to him, which makes us better. He is patient and encourages us with perfect ideas to better our game. He knows what he is doing."

In addition to having Stéphane's guidance, Taran also has an advocate in his brother, Eshaan, who also plays on the 2006 team. Having your older brother play with you is almost like having a second coach, Taran said.

"My brother will review my practice and games and help me with tips to improve, like working on my left, how to turn with the ball, mental fitness. We are both very competitive with each other and I enjoy being on the same team," Taran said. "Now we are always talking about soccer and bouncing ideas off of each other. He reminds me what Coach Stéphane tells me to work on. It's like having a second coach."



Taran and his brother Eshaan enjoy playing for ESI on the 2006 team.



Taran kicks off the 2020-2021 season with ESI league games.



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I feel the focus is on learning which is different from my previous club where we played to win at all cost.

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INSIDE THE INSTITUTE

Eshaan appreciates the technical aspect of playing for ESI.

PLAYER CORNER: RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

For Eshaan Singh, the goal is simple: play soccer at the highest level in Europe. In order to meet this challenge, Eshaan is making the most of his experience at ESI. He joined ESI in 2019 and has appreciated the opportunities to travel internationally, play futsal, and to develop more rapidly and completely as a player through 4 to 5 practices each week. He also recognizes the positive implications of the Institute's core values and player objective.

"What's different about ESI compared to my previous club is focusing on player development instead of trying to win the game," said Eshaan. "Stéphane has taught us to focus on certain topics during the game instead of just trying to win, and at my old club my coach taught us to do anything necessary to win the game. This allows each individual player to develop their game one aspect at a time while also improving the overall team chemistry."

Eshaan has also enjoyed the unique opportunities of playing soccer internationally – like traveling to Spain and the French Caribbean. During his time in Spain, Eshaan scored a hatrick and was able to keep the opposing team's pennant - what he calls his proudest soccer moment to date.

"I've had two international experiences, one being in Barcelona where I had the opportunity to play against local Spanish clubs," Eshaan says. "I played with other American players and was coached by La Masia coaches where we were taught how to play the Barca way. Overall the experience opened my eyes and made me realize how much hard work is needed to play at the highest level."

Eshaan also went to Guadeloupe, France with ESI. The March 2020 trip was cut short by Covid-19 but Eshaan was still able to participate in practices with players from around the globe. He acknowledged the next-level experience and exposure to high-end talent as something that definitely supports his goal to play at the highest level one day.

"We had a couple practices at Pole Espoir and the players there were disciplined, fast, and aggressive," Eshaan said. "Even though we only got a short glimpse of how the game was played there, it was obvious that these players put a lot of work in their craft."

Of all his experiences with ESI, playing in Futsal Nationals stands out as a special highlight. To get to Nationals Eshaan had to re-learn the game of futsal with a fresh approach – retraining in such a way to play futsal the "ESI way." "Playing futsal at ESI is completely different than other clubs," Eshaan said. "We (ESI) focus a lot on the technical aspect of

the game like dribbling, passing, movement, etc. along with the speed of play and defensive strategies. At my old club it really was just run around and try to score a goal. I never experienced learning how to play the game the right way."

Meeting the challenge of ESI futsal to play "fast, technical, and smart" was ambitious and Eshaan had to work hard to adapt to this style of play. He can clearly see how Stéphane's coaching and guidance through futsal season transferred into new skills and improved performance of the team during the outdoor season.

These collective unique opportunities are some of the great ways Stéphane keeps ESI's program challenging and competitive, which keeps Eshaan motivated. "I'm always waiting for the next challenge."

Eshaan knows that Stéphane and his ESI teammates provide all the tools that support his player progress and growth. Eshaan says, "Stéphane has a different view toward the game than other coaches. He is not focused on winning the game but helping each player develop technically and tactically to reach the next level."

Part of the step up in development has also included learning the value of becoming a better teammate.

"A life lesson I learned at ESI is being a team player because in life or sports if you are trying to win, you can only do that by supporting others on your team so they can succeed at their job," Eshaan said.

For the 2020-2021 season, one of his newest teammates is his brother, Taran. Supporting his brother on and off the field is rewarding on multiple levels, including raising the level of both of their play - with additional time to refine skills outside of practice.

"Playing with my brother is a great experience that many players don't get to have," he said. "The benefits of playing with him is that we have the brother-like bond so we know what each other is going to do. We get to practice together outside of ESI and talk/implement the things we've been working on at practice to master them which is a big part in developing your game."



UPCOMING EVENTS & SCHEDULES

For the Latest ESI News check us out on the web!

WORDS FROM THE DIRECTOR

Importance of Receiving and Giving

This is a subject that goes further than soccer.

At ESI our teams are composed of two age groups. Every year, some of our players move up to the older age group, while others become the oldest players in their age group after having been the youngest the previous year.

Often at the beginning of the season, after two or three weeks of training I have discussions with the oldest players in the team, due to their lack of patience and positive leadership with the new younger players. I understand their feeling concerning the drop in intensity at first, or the fact that they are not as athletically challenged with the younger players. That's when, I remind them that one year ago they were the younger ones, and were more than happy to train with older players and benefit from their guidance and advice.

Soccer is not only about tactics, technique, fitness, etc...it is also about leadership, patience, holding your teammates accountable, work ethic, and communicating positive energy in every aspect. Along with soccer, this is what our players develop the most during their second year in the age group. They also have to take more responsibility during games in order to lead and facilitate the younger players' integration.

Player development is important yes...but growing as a good person even more!



- STÉPHANE AUVRAY



ESI U15's kickoff the 2020-2021 season with league games.



TEAM SCHEDULES: SEPTEMBER 2020

U15

September 12:
League Game

September 18:
League Game

September 26:
League Game

U17

September 5 -6:
2020 Cornhusker
Classic

September 20:
League Games

September 27:
League Game