



# Damian Jones and SALT Lead Clinic For Youth Soccer Coaches At Public School Stadium In Association With St. Louis City SC

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer  
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ALTON - A clinic for youth soccer coaches in the area was recently held at Public School Stadium and led by Damian Jones, a local youth soccer coach and co-founder of Student-Athletes Leading Tomorrow (SALT), a Riverbend-area organization that helps and mentors at-risk youth through sports and helps them achieve their highest potential.

The clinic was held in conjunction with St. Louis City SC, the first-year expansion team in Major League Soccer, and was a huge success.

"They call it the Coaching for Coaches program," Jones said in a recent interview, "and it's aimed at youth coaches around the region to both increase their technical knowledge, but also to increase social and emotional learning skills for how to engage the children on a deeper level."

It was a clinic for coaches only and helped them learn how to engage with their players on a deeper level.

"You know, it's using kind of the structure and format that a lot of youth coaches are familiar with," Jones said.



"Having come up through soccer, maybe as players, but also, their experience as coaches. So it's kind of using structured methodology that they're familiar with, but incorporating within, kind of like, the Xs and Os, knowledge that they're gaining from the professional coaching staff at St. Louis City. They're also learning some of those social and emotional concepts that are so important when you're engaging children through sports."

Oftentimes, young people see the field of play, such as soccer pitches, as their refuge from the problems they may face in their lives and it's important to help the kids feel welcome and joy in sports such as The Beautiful Game.

"Oftentimes, young people find their sports teams and activities their refuge, their places of peace in, maybe circumstances, a place for them to escape,' Jones said. "And so, you want to make that's the most uplifting and positive experience possible because we want to keep those kids engaged in those positive experiences right off the bat."

The recent opening of a mini-pitch soccer court at Rock Springs Park and the involvement with City SC, along with the rich history of the game in St. Louis, has been a very positive experience and development for Alton and Riverbend soccer.

"It's how I pictured it when word came we were going to secure an MLS franchise," Jones said. "It's very satisfying to have a city here engaged, plugging in, and making themselves available as a resource for our community. This is such a great asset to have."

Another clinic is scheduled in the future and local youth coaches don't need a U.S. Soccer Federation license to participate.

"This is for anyone who wants to engage with children through soccer," Jones said.

"If you're a youth coach, even if you're a parent who's volunteering for a youth soccer team. If you have a child that's participating in youth soccer, this is a wonderful resource for you to gain some expertise and knowledge from a professional coaching staff and to meet up with other like-minded coaches throughout the league."

For more information on upcoming clinics around the area, please e-mail Jones at [damianjones@saltyouth.org](mailto:damianjones@saltyouth.org), or you may find the information on the St. Louis City SC website, [www.stlcitysc.com](http://www.stlcitysc.com) and click on the Community tab under CityFUTURES under Coaching the Coaches.

