

SIUE/Granite graduate Trittschuh coaches Colorado Springs against St. Louis pro soccer team

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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Like many who grew up in Granite City, Steve Trittschuh starting playing soccer in his youth in a Granite City program that was populated with many great coaches.



Like others who came up in that program, he starred for his high-school team, playing at Granite City North from 1979-82, the final four years of the Steeler soccer program (the school – now Sam Wolf Campus of Southwestern Illinois College – closed in 1983) under Bob Kehoe.

Trittschuh went on from there to several professional teams, both in the United States and Europe; he played for both the old St. Louis Steamers in the Major Indoor Soccer

League and the original St. Louis Ambush in the National Professional Soccer League indoors and played for outdoor teams both domestically and in Europe, including a stint with the Colorado Rapids of Major League Soccer in the league's early days.

He's also represented the USA on the national team; he played for the team in the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games and, most notably, played for the team in the 1990 FIFA World Cup in Italy, which represented the first American team to play in the finals since the legendary 1950 team.

Today, Trittschuh has been coaching, and Friday night, Trittschuh will come home to the St. Louis area as the coach of the Colorado Springs Switchbacks FC when they take on Saint Louis FC in a United Soccer League match at World Wide Technology Soccer Park in Fenton, Mo.

Yes, it's been an interesting journey from the fields of Granite City to running a first-year franchise in the third-division level USL. But Trittschuh wouldn't want it any other way.

“I've come home for games, of course, and to see my family,” Trittschuh said. “But coming home to coach after I've played here for the national team in both friendlies and in (World Cup) qualifying matches is great. There's still a lot of connections for me here with guys like (STLFC owner) Jim Kavanaugh and (STLFC coach) Dale Schilly; there's a lot of memories playing here and at SIUE.”

Being from Granite City in the era of two high schools, Trittschuh still remembers the often fierce rivalry between his Steelers and the Granite South Warriors, especially on the soccer field; both teams were perennial state championship contenders and often clashed during the postseason at key moments, adding fuel to an often hot fire during the regular season.

“That was a great rivalry,” Trittschuh recalled. “There were times when it got more intense than anything I would experience in college or when I was playing on the national team or professionally. It's definitely something I don't think anyone is going to be seeing again; those were some great games.”

Going on to SIUE and then into the pro ranks, including time on the national team, Trittschuh's career reached a crescendo when he helped the national team reach the World Cup finals in 1990; he played extensively in the team's opening match against then-Czechoslovakia in Florence. Trittschuh also played in leagues in Czechoslovakia and The Netherlands as well as for domestic-based clubs both in Florida and Colorado, joining the Rapids when MLS began play in the spring of 1996, two years following the USA's hosting of the 1994 World Cup.

He went on to coach the Rapids as an assistant for several years before taking the job with the Switchbacks for their inaugural season in USL, which is a third-division league under the US Soccer system and a developmental league for MLS. His goal for the Switchbacks is simple: Help develop players for future spots on MLS teams and possibly even the US Men's National Team.

“We have some experienced players on the team, but the goal is to develop players and help them get to the next level,” Trittschuh said. “If they play well and with consistency, I can help them reach whatever level they want.

“I still do some scouting and US Soccer Academy work and it's great to see. The coaching in this country is getting better and better and we're all seeing soccer getting bigger and bigger here. I think we've got a bright future ahead of us as far as soccer goes in the United States.”