

John Pingelton

### “What Youth Soccer Has Meant to Me”

Looking back on my years of playing soccer, the things I will remember most are the relationships I built with everyone I played with and was coached by. It's really weird to compare the boys I learned with in that first year to the men I played with in my final year. Staying with the same team throughout my run, I got to lose best friends to premature burnout and lack of talent. At the time, I thought I'd never see these guys again, but years later these are some of my best friends.

Soccer isn't just a sport to me with rules and bad refs, it is a way of life I'll have a hard time walking away from. It will be hard to walk away from all the Kip Shuberts and Tom Pecores, those great soccer moms and dads who don't miss a game, and most of all the friends I've created while traveling, practicing and competing together. All the places I've traveled and played at gave me a cornucopia of memories and character to last me through college and beyond. Soccer will forever be with me and I hope one day I will have kids of my own I can watch go through the same struggles and hardships of practicing four times a week. I want to watch them receive the satisfaction of their hard work paying off on the pitch. Because if I had a chance to do it all over again, I wouldn't change a thing.