

Keyes ready to try pro coaching soccer shoes for size

By **CHUCK HLAVA**
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Brandon Keyes' dossier of credentials keeps expanding.

Anyone who knows soccer in the Bay Area knows Keyes.

For several years his successful soccer school and camps have turned out hundreds of young players in the Bay Area. His knowledge of the game is second to none.

He began his love for soccer in his native Ireland, playing for the Home Farm Professional Club Youth team in 1980. That was just the beginning.

Armed with a business degree from Hackney College in London, he moved to Houston and played for the Houston Rangers, state champions for three years running. He was a player and trainer for the Houston Force Professional Soccer A League. That's where he learned the art of promoting the sport. In 1993-96 he played for the Texas State Select Team, where he was MVP and top scorer. Staying in the professional ranks he played for the Houston Hurricanes, where he was also the trainer and did marketing and promoting. It was there where he met Hurricanes owner Joseph Marc Serralta Ives. The two have been good friends for many years.

In between, Keyes began in 1990 as director for Soccer Development, training U8 to U20 Division I and II teams. He's still at it. He was also a trainer for the Olympic Development Programme as trainer to U12 to U14 boys and girls.

He proudly possesses licenses from the Football Association of Ireland (Pro License National Coaching) and a National Coaching License from the United States Soccer Federation.

Now, about to turn 44, Keyes has added another chapter to his spreadsheet.

He just completed the Soccer Management & Scouting Course, a highly coveted program.

Keyes was one of 303 students from several countries taking the course.

He finished No. 1 in his class in the 8-week course. It can be considered a career-changing course.

What was his reason in taking

the tough course?

"I want to be a coach in the pro ranks," he said. "It was a great course. I'd recommend it to anyone who wants to get into the professional aspect."

Keyes is the only one in Texas to hold the Soccer Management & Scouting Course.

He still hopes to keep his feet in the youth training.

"When I'm on the field with kids, I'm in my element," he said. "I love talking with the kids."

That goes for coaching older players too and his new diploma can open doors for professional coaching and also promoting and marketing. He already has the experience in the sport.

Keyes prepped for four months prior to starting the Soccer Management Course. He went through every aspect of the sport and even interviewed Houston Dynamo Assistant Coach John Spencer on a 7-minute tape and sent it to be reviewed.

"I felt like a reporter," he said of the Spencer interview.

Being No. 1 in his class already got him a scouting gig with Soccer Management. Plus he has turned in his resume for coaching positions with the Dynamo and the Houston Leones, a United Soccer Leagues team that plays out of the Richmond-Rosenberg area. The Leones have a stadium in Richmond. The season is coming to a close and their last three games are away: at Laredo Heat; at DFW Tornados and at Mississippi Brilla.

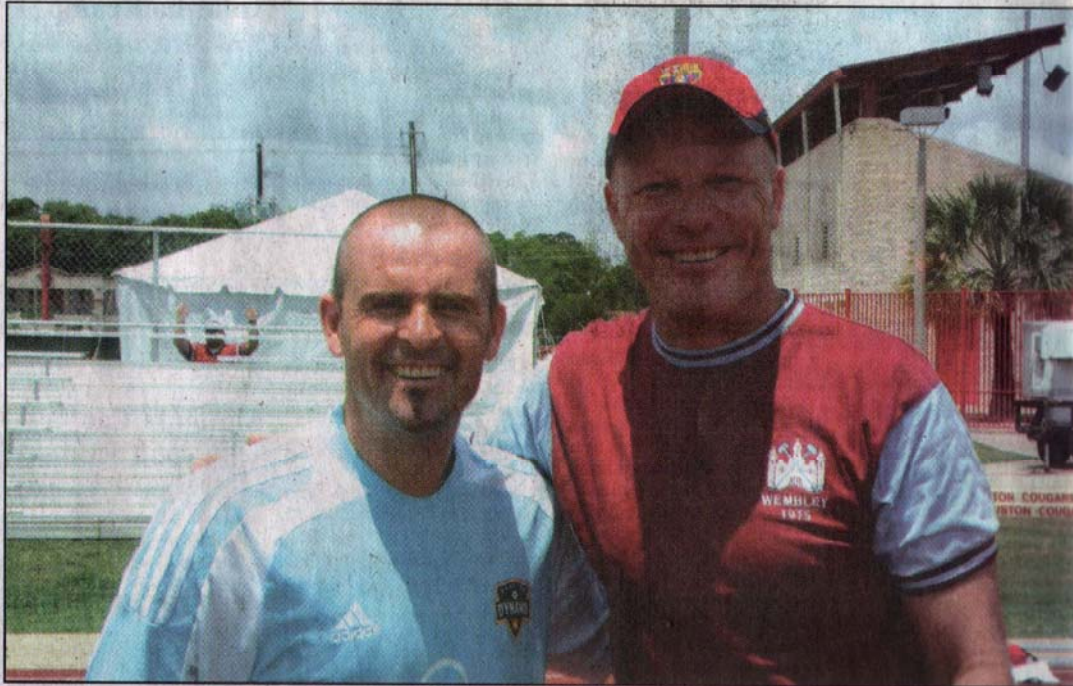
Keyes got his first response to his resume on Tuesday when Leones owner Juan Carlos Hernandez called him to interview for the head coaching job.

"I'm really excited about this," Keyes said.

Keyes has ventured to Richmond a few times, watched the Leones in action and came away impressed with the entire organization.

"Hernandez basically started this team from the ground up," Keyes said. "He built the stadium himself. It's pretty remarkable what he did."

The only thing missing on Keyes' resume is that 'coach' title of a professional soccer team. It may be a thing of the past for Coach Keyes.



Brandon Keyes (right) with his interview subject, Houston Dynamo assistant coach John Spencer.

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Brandon Keyes meets up with Houston Dynamo defender Craig Waibel (right).

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