

# Keyes to Success



Former Soccer Pro Brendan Keyes Finds Enjoyment in the Game as a Player and Coach.

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# STILL GETTING HIS KICKS

## Keyes enjoys soccer as a player, coach

By PAT TURNER  
Sports Edition

After all these years as a player and a coach, Brendan Keyes still can't get enough soccer.

When you've played the sport as long as you can remember and have excelled as an amateur and professional, it's hard to get burned out.

The Irish native, who resides in Pearland, probably couldn't give up the sport even if he wanted to call it quits. He's no longer getting his kicks on the professional circuit, but Keyes is staying active.

In addition to playing for the Houston Celtic, the 37-year-old Keyes is also director and head coach for Soccer Development.

"I like being involved in soccer," said Keyes, who holds a United States Soccer Federation License. "I like coaching. It's easier to tell younger players what to do than someone who is 25-years-old. They're eager to learn, especially girls. Soccer is what I've done all my life. It's my bread and butter."

Keyes had quite a successful run as a professional. He built his reputation with impressive showings with two of Ireland's best teams (Home Farm, Stella Morris).

Seeing better opportunities in the United States, Keyes came to Houston in 1986, playing for the Dynamo, the Force and the Hurricanes.

As a player, Keyes had a reputation for being a major scoring threat. One season, he kicked in 32 goals. More impressive than that was his scoring spree as an amateur, which included 62 goals one season with the Houston Rangers.

In addition, Keyes played a big role in promoting Sport Aid '86, an event highlighted by the presence of soccer great Pele.

"I came here (to play professionally) because the money was so much better at the time," said Keyes, who joined the Dynamo in 1985. "I was making \$600 a week and that was pretty decent money back then. There weren't many soccer players making that at the time. But I would have played for nothing, because I love the game."

Whenever Keyes hit the field, his intensity and focus left no doubt he came ready to play. He still has that same fire playing for the Celtic. However, it's also evident in his coaching as he strives to make younger players reach their potential. He feeds them a steady diet of fundamentals, while also stressing the importance of the mental game.

He has year-round training and is planning camps the rest of the summer. He also plans to have camps during the holiday season.

Seeing students develop into quality players is just as thrilling to him as kicking in a

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## KEYES

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ers is just as thrilling to him as kicking in a game-winning goal.

"If you're taking kids who have never played the game you start teaching the basics," Keyes said. "When you have someone who has played the game, you start concentrating on tactics. I enjoy watching the kids develop their game. One year, I had a 14-year-old who had never played the game. He came in and showed something. Now, he is a fantastic player."

Keyes started his Soccer Development program several years ago, before taking a two-year break to develop his coaching skills in England with mentor Noel Mulhall.

Now, he's back and ready to go. He plans to have camps the rest of the summer and will also have year-round training. Don't be

surprised if he talks Mulhall into coming to Houston for a clinic.

"I had him here a few years ago and he was great," Keyes said. "They kids loved him. He is the best coach I've worked with in my career. He is incredible. I learned a lot about his training methods and drills. I've never seen anyone do what he has done before. He is the Joè Montana of soccer. I hope we can get him back here."

If the success from his previous stint with Soccer Development is any indication of what's in store, Keyes should enjoy a nice run.

Six of his teams won state championships. In fact, he got an additional upon returning to Houston recently when learning several of his former students helped

Friendswood's girls to the Class 4A State Championship.

"I remember a lot of those girls," Keyes said.

"They were good back and I knew they would continue to get better. It was exciting to hear they won a state championship."

As coach, Keyes' highlight came from a 14-year-old team that won the championship in a European Tournament during the late 1980s.

Many critics didn't believe the American team would even win a game as the tourney field was loaded with quality competition from Germany, Russia, England and Ireland. But Keyes' team beat the odds and every opponent it faced.

"I was hoping we would be competitive,"

Keyes said. "When we got there, people were laughing and saying, 'I don't think you American kids can do it.' They weren't laughing after it was over. We had a wonderful tournament. I think that success put us (Soccer Development) on the map."

Of course, Keyes still finds time to play soccer. As a member of The Celtic, an amateur team consisting of seven Irish, four English, seven Scottish and one American player, is staying active.

So far, the team is doing quite well. They recently won the Cinco De Mayo Tournament by not allowing a goal the entire time.

It may not be the professional ranks, but for Keyes it's still exciting. After all, soccer is his bread and butter.