



Jay Hoffman has coached at virtually every level of the men's and women's professional and amateur soccer ranks since launching his coaching career with his alma mater - East Stroudsburg (PA) State University - in the early 1970's.

Hoffman's pro stops included assistant coach roles with the Houston Hurricane and Edmonton Drillers of the North American Soccer League and the New Jersey Rockets and Cleveland Force of the Major Indoor Soccer League. He also served as the first Head Coach of the Boston Breakers (2001-2002) of the Women's United Soccer Association.

At the international level, Hoffman has worked with the United States men's U-20 team and served as an assistant coach for the famed 1999 U.S. Women's National Team which defeated China to win the FIFA World Cup before 90,000 fans at The Rose Bowl. He has also served as the Head Coach of the United States Paralympic Soccer team since 2002. Today, Hoffman is the Director of Coaching - Academy for the Virginia Rush soccer club.

Hoffman's first professional Head Coach posting came with the Buffalo Stallions of the Major Indoor Soccer League during the 1982-83 season.

Jay Hoffman spoke with Fun While It Lasted about the Buffalo Stallions on May 13th, 2011.

Interview begins after the page jump.

FWiL:

Jay, you migrated to the indoor game at a time when MISL clubs like the St. Louis Steamers and Kansas City Comets were drawing better than NHL and NBA teams in their cities. Meanwhile the North American Soccer League and the outdoor game in the United States was collapsing. Was there a sense that indoor was becoming the more desirable game for players and coaches? Or was it just a way to earn a living while the outdoor game tried to sort itself out?

Hoffman:

The Major Indoor Soccer League kept the professional game alive in this country. It was the only place players could make a real living from playing after the NASL contracted. The MISL did everything it could both on the field and off to make it work. The games were exciting, action packed and when you look at the number and quality of players who played the game, it was no wonder to me that we had a very special product.

FWiL:

Buffalo was your first head coaching gig after several assistant jobs in the NASL and MISL. How did you come to arrive in Buffalo in 1982?

Hoffman:

I was the assistant coach for the New Jersey Rockets at the time, however we were in the process of folding <in 1982> and I was without a job. At the same time I was also interviewed for the Cleveland Force head coaching position. I was offered the Buffalo job first and accepted.

FWiL:

The MISL pioneered much of the entertainment spectacle that is now taken for granted at NBA and NHL games - things such as indoor pyrotechnics and ornate player introductions. But at the time it was pretty cutting edge stuff. What was your opinion on the blend of sport vs. spectacle back in the early days of indoor?

Hoffman:

Being a purist, it should never have taken away from the game. However I think it was used to provide entertainment for everyone and if you look today a lot of what you have said has taken place. We had some great visionaries in the sport and if you follow their careers look where some have gone, NBA and AEG to name a few, both from the same family*!

** Hoffman is referring to former MISL executives Tim & Tod Leiweke.*

FWiL:

The Stallions ownership was a consortium of local supermarket executives and industrialists. The team was a year or two removed from its peak attendance days in Buffalo. What was the mood of the ownership group by the time you arrived for the team's fourth season?

Hoffman:

The mood was very up beat. The club had a very good presence in the community. The ownership was local which helped in many aspects of developing this atmosphere. As you mentioned being removed from its peak in attendance also placed some restrictions on the budget.

FWiL:

How did your player budget compare to what other teams were spending around the MISL in 1982-83? What reputation did the Stallions have among MISL players as far as how they treated players and being willing to spend for top talent?

Hoffman:

When I arrived the budget was very tightly managed. We certainly did not compete monetarily with the "Forces" of the league, if you get my drift. I think the players enjoyed playing there. They were well treated by the club, supported by the city and it was a place where the players had an opportunity to become very well known in the community.

FWiL:

On paper, it seems odd that the Stallions relieved you in the middle of your first season with a record close to the .500 mark (15-18). Was this move purely about the team's record, or were there some more fundamental disagreements between you and the management?

Hoffman:

I think it was more about expectations, perceived versus realistic.

FWiL:

I've seen comments from former Buffalo Sabres player who recall the steepness of the stands at the Aud and the feeling that the fans were right on top of them as they played. Any special memories of playing and working in that building?

Hoffman:

It was a special place to play. The fans are right on top of you. It gives them a sense of looking down on the game. It was an old building, all cement and metal. With the design, everyone was close in and <it got> very loud. As for the location of the building it was right down own, off the lake. Some days the biggest challenge during the winter was to get from your car to the office!