

Dear Mark,

We are VERY happy with our decision to join Santos. You may not remember, but you and I spoke at one of the tryouts and you broke it down for me as a newcomer. Everything you said was true. My boys have Mazi & Matar - great dudes. And they have great teammates with nice families. Thanks for everything you & Brenda do to keep the train running. Seriously, my boys absolutely love Santos. Their skills are developing nicely too!

*Very satisfied 1st time Santos parents*

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Dear Seymour,

My eldest daughter, now 22, and I were sitting in our New York City apartment tonight talking about Upper Arlington and the Santos teams that she and her sister played on, and remembering how much both girls learned from you and Maziya. We thought you might want to know that my younger daughter, whom you coached when she was in middle school, has turned out to be a successful college player. She plays NCAA Division 1, at West Point Military Academy, where she was the Defensive Player of the year in the Patriot League both freshman and sophomore years. Now, going into her junior year, she will be team captain. Last year she was shortlisted for the Hermann Trophy, which I guess is a big deal. Both daughters say that you and Maziya taught them more about the game than any other coach, and both remember you very fondly. All I ever wanted for them was that they love to play....and they do, although I swear some of their coaches did their best to kill the joy. I hope that things are going well for you. There are many lucky young men and women in UA, learning the game from you -- the kind of training you provide is rare, in my experience, and I am thankful my girls got to play with you.

*Happy Soccer Mom*

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Our daughter will not be able to participate in the spring season due to school activities. Please know that she has fully enjoyed her time on your team and under your coaching guidance. Not sure, but if there is a high school team in fall she would like to join. Please let me know if there is such a team.

Thank You Seymour! You made a wonderful impression on a young girl that loves to learn and improve!

**A Mom**

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I had a recent opportunity to serve as a volunteer field marshal in a tournament (Cincy Challenge) that some of the TVSA teams attended. I was impressed by your coach, Matar, and how he interacted with his U10 Boys' teams throughout their games. Not only was he very much involved in the game, but he never said, or yelled, anything other than positive comments to his players. The boys seemed to respond extremely well to his upbeat and positive attitude. It was nice to see.

### **From a tournament Field Marshal**

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Dear Team and Parents,

Please bear with me here, I feel compelled to share something and hope you'll indulge a little time to reflect on it...

As Ben and his buddies round the corner into their senior year, I find myself contemplative about many things... watching many of these boys grow up since kindergarten, who now tower over their parents; seeing how they've developed into such fine young men who are bright, polite, athletic, and good sports.

Many of us have been with Mazi and Santos since the 4th grade. Watching his laid back Jamaican attitude was frustrating at times (administratively!), but we now see how he methodically taught our boys a game of soccer different than all the rest. The kind of game that caused us to lose most games in the beginning as we tried to control the ball with passes instead of kicking it down the field and running fast... the kind of game that doesn't stress winning, but skills and love of the game; that doesn't burn out kids by high school, that teaches the boys to take responsibility and lead... the kind of game we all really enjoy watching now, and can appreciate his flavor of training over these past 8 years.

There's another part of Mazi's training in which we have shared, and that's the international flavor he brings to our team. Again, frustrating at times!! who's on the team, when do they show up, last minute adds, what's fair, get parents to sign forms?-ha!, etc.... but one thing is clear, and that's the passion Mazi has in reaching out to less privileged urban youth.

He's very quiet about it - rarely tells anyone much of anything. But I know that he has spent his own money to rent a van to pick up all these kids and put them up in a hotel overnight to play in a tournament. One kid had never been on an elevator before. He tries to inspire them to study and read everyday and work hard. He expects them to work hard at soccer like he did as a teenager in Jamaica, who eventually made it to the national team with his love of the game.

Have you ever read the book, [Outcasts United](#)? It's written by a New York Times reporter, about a town in Georgia where tens of thousands of refugees had settled from Africa, and how one woman, Luma, gave some of them the chance to come together and enjoy something they love - soccer. Parts of the book are quite fascinating in how the town dealt with the changes this influx of foreigners caused, how some adjusted and embraced it and others refused to even look. Luma

was this rag-tag-team's coach, with no money for uniforms or a decent field, but who gave those kids hope and something to believe in.

Mazi is Luma, in Columbus, Ohio.

We have 5 boys on our team from different countries in Africa. They don't live next to us in the nicer neighborhoods of Columbus. Some we've known for awhile, others not so long, most sure are fun to watch play. At times, we wouldn't have had enough for a team without "Mazi's boys."

But I want to ask our boys to think about something...

What does this mean to you?

Has it changed you at all? Do you know them?

In the next 6 weeks of soccer this spring, would you like to do anything different to make the most of the opportunity of having these boys on our team?

In many ways, they're just like our teenage boys. I've often driven them and - like my sons - they don't talk much, they put earphones in and listen to music, they like McDonalds, and they laugh and have fun imitating Mazi. :) They have aspirations for college. They're polite. I want to tell them to put on a coat because it's cold out. :) I really enjoy them.

Quietly and without complaining, over the years, Mazi has always picked them up for practices and games. They usually have to stay with Maz through 2 or 3 practices or games before he takes them home. Typically this adds 1.5 hrs of driving for Maz, on both sides of a game. A couple years ago I made him share some of that with me.

In the book, Luma affectionately called her team the "Fugees" - short for refugees. I am so thankful for the "Fugees" on our team; so thankful for the unique opportunity Mazi has given our boys to grow in their world-view by getting to know and play alongside kids who grew up playing futbol barefoot, on dirt, with a rolled up ball of tape...

I just don't want it to pass by and only be about winning soccer games...

*A parent and team administrator*

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