

Gallup Soccer League looks to make improvements

Written by By Boderra Joe Sun Correspondent
Friday, 30 March 2018 05:25



After a recent visit from the head coach of the University of New Mexico's men's soccer team, the Gallup Soccer League is eager to get its own ball rolling.

Coach Jeremy Fishbein and UNM Athletic Director Eddie Nuñez both spoke to a crowd of fans at Sammy C's March 21 during a Lobo Meet & Greet event. In attendance were Alejandro Murillo and Delfino Sanchez: the head coach of the U8 GSL team and the league's vice president, respectively.

The two said they felt honored to be present in a meeting with the university's head coach and athletic director, as it was a great way for them to get things started for this year's league.

IMPROVING THE LEAGUE

The GSL has six new board members, all whom aspire to improve and make changes for the league.

On their website, the league describes itself as a "parent-volunteer organization established to benefit community youth."

Murillo and Sanchez's involvement in the GSL reflects that mission statement, as both have

Gallup Soccer League looks to make improvements

Written by By Boderra Joe Sun Correspondent
Friday, 30 March 2018 05:25

kids on GSL teams.

As coaches, the pair noticed that once the season was over, there was a tremendous drop in youth interest in the game, and kids took up other sports, leaving the soccer ball alone on the field and replacing it with football or basketball.

“Soccer is only once a year and these sports [basketball and baseball] are year long,” Murillo said.

Introducing goals to the league is one change they hope to make, which Murillo and Sanchez believe will keep up engagement even during the off-season. They want to provide plenty of opportunities for not just the youths but for teenagers and adults to continue playing the game they love.

Murillo, 29, originally from Chihuahua, Mexico, coached the Gallup High School boy’s soccer team from 2014 to 2016. He stepped down to coach the U8 GSL team in 2017.

“I thought if I could teach fundamentals in the city league, I could feed kids to high schools to play at a higher level,” Murillo said of the move. “That’s where I’m trying to attack now, is the little kids.”

During his time as a head coach at the high school level, Murillo noticed that some of his players weren’t familiar with the fundamentals of soccer. His players for the U8 team are age six and seven, an age group Murillo thinks will be better served by his training.

“That’s where they [youths] build fundamentals so that high school coaches don’t have to teach fundamentals,” he said. “I want to try and make a difference in my reach.”

Sanchez agrees.

Gallup Soccer League looks to make improvements

Written by By Boderra Joe Sun Correspondent
Friday, 30 March 2018 05:25

Sanchez, from Gallup, feels that soccer doesn't get the same recognition in Gallup as other sports like football, baseball and basketball.

"We want to see soccer grow more in the area," Sanchez said. "There's a lot of opportunity, especially when you start seeing how many youths come out [to play]."

WHY CARE?

In a GSL video shared on their website, John O'Sullivan, founder and CEO of the Changing the Game Project from 2012, said, "every year in the United States, about 40 million children play youth sports, yet 70% of those kids drop out and quit by the time they are 13 years old." He continued, "three out of four children are done with sports before high school."

Sanchez suggested that if the league perhaps brings the competitiveness of the soccer up, maybe kids would continue to grow in soccer beyond learning the fundamentals of the sport.

"It's a sport that is growing in in this country," he said. "But it's not near anything like baseball, football at this point."

MORE THAN KICKING A BALL

There are successful leagues in Gallup for youths in football, basketball, baseball and softball. While the GSL is aiming to add soccer to that list, Sanchez added that they have broader goals, too.

"I think if we can definitely step in and get with the schools and say, 'Hey look schools, this is what we're trying to do, what do you guys think about trying to make the movement bigger than just 'Gallup Soccer League' but 'McKinley County' wide,'" Sanchez said.

Gallup Soccer League looks to make improvements

Written by By Boderra Joe Sun Correspondent
Friday, 30 March 2018 05:25

What can the league do to get soccer to blossom more in the surrounding areas?

“If these kids are coming in from Churchrock, Tohatchi, Crownpoint, Window Rock, why not?” Sanchez asked. “Something has to be happening that [parents] are willing to drive their kids out here for practice or for a game, something is working.”

While Sanchez wants to get more kids involved in the league, there are barriers for some families that go beyond a lack of interest or a long off-season. The sport can cost time, money and transportation to get to and from practice or games. There is also a registration fee for the GSL, which includes the jersey, socks, and a soccer ball.

“I know sometimes parents can’t afford to get their children in,” Sanchez said. “We are actually going to look into how we can help some of the families that are in need to help get their kids in the league.”

JUST THE BEGINNING

The season hasn’t yet begun but Murrillo and Sanchez already want to get a head start on addressing questions and concerns over the league’s progress and goals.

“Our board is new but we’re all looking for a lot of changes,” Sanchez said.

He and Murillo did give an example of some proposed changes. The league is interested in a new soccer complex with turf where all the games could be held, instead of having to bounce from field to field in Gallup.

They are also considering hosting a UNM Lobos soccer camp, where players from the Lobos team can come out and teach youth about soccer.

Gallup Soccer League looks to make improvements

Written by By Boderra Joe Sun Correspondent
Friday, 30 March 2018 05:25

“We have a lot of stuff on our agenda,” Sanchez said. “It’s going to take of a lot of work, a lot of patience and time, but we got the right people to do it.”

For more information, visit: <http://www.gallupsoccerleague.com> .

By Boderra Joe

Sun Correspondent