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State soccer icon to head Pike youth club

By Nat Newell

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Dan Kapsalis enjoyed sitting in the Fishers High School stands at his son Andreas' soccer games the past two seasons but he couldn't escape one thought: I should be doing more. With 39 of his 46 years spent connected to soccer in some capacity -- including 14 as the head boys coach at Carmel, culminating with the 2006 state and national title -- Kapsalis couldn't stay away from the sport. He signed a five-year contract as the director of the Pike Youth Soccer Club and Indy Burn travel program earlier this month. "I was sitting in the bleachers, which is unusual for me, and that's when it hit me," said Kapsalis, who had been working as the assistant director of amateurism for Division I and II domestic and international athletes in the NCAA Eligibility Center. "I was in the background. It was nice but I've always been the guy that's (in the middle of it). "I sat back and thought, 'I should be getting more involved.' "

Kapsalis was using his ties to the Indiana soccer community to help Tom Geisse, the executive director of the Pike Youth Soccer Club, recommend a candidate for its position. The more Kapsalis heard about the job, however, the more he realized it was the opportunity he was looking for. "They have the same beliefs in developing people more than soccer players (that I have)," said Kapsalis, who had been looking for an opportunity to get back into soccer for more than a month. "I've always seen soccer as an avenue to have an impact on kids. They shared my philosophy and I said, 'What if I was interested?' "The conversation got more serious and grabbed my attention. I had a wonderful time at the NCAA but when this opportunity came up, it fed my passion and was an offer in a full-time capacity. It's a very unique opportunity." The Pike Youth Soccer Club, which has more than 10,000 members, has been operating for 30 years but this is the first time the organization has hired a full-time director. "Dan Kapsalis is simply the best qualified person in Indiana to fulfill this role," Geisse said in a press release. "His dedication and experience is unmatched. Dan will oversee and direct all aspects of Pike Soccer Club's soccer and referee programming. The 10,000 members are thrilled to have Dan share his love for soccer with us."

Kapsalis has been associated with soccer in Indiana at nearly every level, beginning with winning two national championships as a player at Indiana University. He has served as deputy executive director and director of coaching for the Indiana Youth Soccer State Association, and coordinated and administered the Indiana Olympic Soccer Development program. He founded the Indianapolis United Soccer Club and served as its president from 1991 to 2001, helping it grow from 50 to 700 players. He has also co-owned and served as vice-president of his family's Soccer Unlimited Inc., a specialty sporting goods and equipment retailer. "(The Pike Youth Soccer Club) has a great tradition, outstanding staff, board and volunteers," said Kapsalis, who has a wife, Nancy, and six kids. "(And) I missed (soccer). Deep down you know it's your passion and it's been tugging at my heart (since a stopped coaching)."

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