



Saint Viator Soccer Coach Returns to His Roots at the World Cup

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The group from Saint Viator cheers on team USA and Jonathan Spector. (back row) Art Spector, Brian Cavers, Birigitta Metzinger, Chris Spector, Olivia Metzinger; (front row) Mike Manno, Mike Taylor and T.J. King.

World Cup 2010 matches playing out in South Africa have allowed Saint Viator Soccer Coach Mike Taylor to return to his roots. The native of Zimbabwe, which borders South Africa, left earlier this month with a contingent of his former players on a three-week trip to watch the sport's premiere tournament.

During their stay, they hope to see at least nine matches, including games featuring the U.S., Brazil, Argentina and Holland. But they also plan to do some sightseeing.

Taylor's sister and father live in South Africa and they helped arrange accommodations for the group.

Their itinerary concludes with a safari at Pilanesberg Game Reserve in South Africa's North West Province, before visiting Zimbabwe, to go whitewater rafting at Victoria Falls, considered one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World.

Taylor has coached soccer at Saint Viator for more than 20 years and last fall collected his second boys' state title. In the spring, he took over the girls' program for the first time and guided the Lady Lions to the Class 2A state finals.

Accompanying Taylor is Saint Viator assistant coach, T.J. King, as well as his father, Tom King, and Assistant Athletic Director Mike Manno.

Former players include Mike Cavers of Arlington Heights; Brian Cavers and Ray Krawzak of Palatine, Bennett Dilly and Jimmy DeBlasio of Barrington, and Greg Reis, soccer coach from Quincy Notre Dame High School.

Of special interest for Taylor and the players, is seeing Team USA and former Saint Viator standout, Jonathan Spector, who played during his freshman and sophomore years before joining a national soccer program.

"Unfortunately we haven't been able to see Jonathan, and I don't think we will be able to," King says. "The team is pretty much kept on lockdown during the tournament for security reasons and to keep them focused on the task at hand."

Spector's classmates and former soccer teammates went on to win the Class A state championship in 2003, after Taylor led the group on a team-building tournament run through Sweden and Denmark that previous summer.

"This is a core of the first group of players that I took to Europe and who paved the way for all future European trips," Taylor says.

"The goal of this trip is to expand that experience to a Third World Country, once again using soccer as the medium," Taylor adds. "This trip will allow them to see all the prosperity, poverty and natural resources that Southern Africa has to offer."

To follow the team and view pictures of their trip, visit: <http://acrossthepitch.blogspot.com>.