

Interview with Matt Granstrand

October 14, 2015

Marquette, Michigan

START OF AUDIO

Gabe Logan (GL): Okay, it's October 14, 2015. I'm Gabe Logan Director of the Center for Upper Peninsula Studies, and I'm interviewing Matt Granstrand. Is that how you say your last name?

Matt Granstrand (MG): yes

GL: Granstrand? Who is the Women's Soccer Coach at Northern Michigan University. We're talking about the development of Women's Soccer in the U.P. in general and Women's Soccer at Northern Michigan University in particular. And so if we could begin this Matt, if you could please spell your full name and provide your date of birth for context?

MG: Sure. It's Matthew, M-A-T-T-H-E-W, Granstrand G-R-A-N-S-T-R-A-N-D, and date of birth is 12-6-65.

GL: Okay. Just as background, where did you grow up? You and your family grow up? Where did you come of age? And what brought you to the U.P.?

MG: I grew up, well, I moved a lot growing up. I was born in New Jersey. I guess my soccer development started there, grew up outside of New York City. I was the only American on my team. Some fantastic players, great...

GL: Where in New Jersey?

MG: In Waldwick, near Ridgewood. And I was born in Patterson.

GL: You were born in Patterson? Woah.

MG: So yeah, I guess that my upbringing, was soccer. You know, great soccer culture up there.

GL: It is.

MG: And got to be a part of that. High school, by high school age we were living in Florida, so I went to high school in Brandon, Florida outside of Tampa. So just a lot of moving around, I think we did seventeen different moves in that time span. But between New Jersey and Tampa, those were the main growing-up points for me and both rich soccer environments which was a great experience.

GL: Before we leave that, so New Jersey, especially Patterson, Harrison, and that area has a century-old history of soccer.

MG: Oh, yeah.

GL: And you said you were the only American on the team?

MG: yeah.

GL: What was the ethnicity, makeup of the clubs?

MG: Oh boy, such a mix. You know, just so much different cultures there. I think the team I played for was mainly Spanish, it's hard to remember. I was a young kid, but you know. I was the one that spoke English. Most did not, but some great friends and I was a beginner. They were so talented I remember they would basically do all the hard work, set the ball up eighteen yards for me and tell me to shoot it. You know, that's the talent level that I got to play with when I was a kid and I was by far the worst player. So, but you know just the environment, the heritage, the culture that comes with it at that age, like really hooked me.

GL: When you went to Florida was it also ethnic dominated or was it more U.S. players?

MG: I'd say half and half. You know, on my team at the high school and at the club levels, still a good mix. Certainly a lot of Spanish in Tampa. Great leagues, you know? They have four different divisions in the Men's League of the club in Tampa. And you get relegated and you know, just you work and so. A rich environment, a lot of homecoming games are for soccer, not for football, both now in New Jersey and in Tampa where we lived, so. Rich environments that really help your growth.

GL: Did your parents play soccer or were you?

MG: No, my dad growing up he was a coach. He coached baseball, he coached football. So my growing up was hanging out at fields. My mom coached volleyball. So growing up for me was just tagging along at different sporting events. But no, they wished I played but you know, back in the day it just wasn't really something they did.

GL: Part of the Pele Generation.

MG: Yeah.

GL: So after high school, if I could just kind of elaborate. I don't get a chance to talk about soccer that much, I get excited about this. After high school where did you go and play college and club ball?

MG: Well I guess even before that I got a really nice experience, you know, I've played club all my life, different clubs and played high school. I also, Umbro which is a clothing brand, used to do, they would have a National team and they would recruit from all over the country. And I was fortunate enough to try-out and make that. And so all through high school I would spend my summers in Europe with the Umbro National Team, they called themselves. And my coaches

were Steve Highway who played for Liverpool and, oh boy, I just forgot that other guy's name. Great guy too. It'll come back to me later.

GL: Okay.

MG: And what was neat was, so I'd do my high school season, I'd go to school, but then over the summer we trained at Liverpool. Trained on their grounds, and we'd go play all the school boy or whatever level reserve squad of the Pro teams in their stadiums. And we'd do that for a while and then come back to the, and then I'd come back and go back to high school and be back in Florida. So that was, for me that was an unbelievable experience playing in front of crowds and thinking you're special until you play, say Man-U's club team and realize you still have a lot to learn. But it was good. It was a good experience, and that led me the opportunity to go play in college because one of the Assistant coaches was the head coach at South Carolina-Spartanburg. So I went there. They were always top five in the country. We were third in the country my freshman year. And that was another neat experience. And that same thing with the South Carolina team, I'd say there were three Americans, at the most. Such an environment of just, we had some African players, we had Iranian players, we had, you name it, we had'em. And so that's, I guess my whole life I've been a part of that mixed culture which I think is so fantastic. And those were, yeah. So I guess soccer-wise that was sort of my background all the way through college.

GL: Was Jesse Marsh kicking around that area? Wasn't he from that?

MG: Who's that?

GL: Jesse Marsh.

MG: Why do I know that name?

GL: He's coaching, he played for Chicago. That's how I know him. And then, well he played and I've watched him play, but Kathryn and I were just out in New York and we saw the, we took in a Red Bull game, and he's coaching the Red Bull.

MG: Is he really?

GL: And I was thinking, yeah I know, yeah I think he was from South Carolina.

MG: Yeah, I know the name, yeah I haven't heard it in years. But wow, yeah. It's funny how the same people are still, still around

GL: I know, a generational.

MG: And are still doing it. I mean my old college coach is coaching out in, he's a women's coach now out in Colorado. But it's a small world.

GL: Soccer-wise it is. I'm trying to think. I sent a kid, when I was coaching in high school in St. Louis I sent a kid to Erskine.

MG: Yeah.

GL: Yeah. And he did very well there, you know he played four years and he came back glowing about that program, and a talented athlete. Looking at this, the game and this is kind of hit me and I'm kind of addressing your aspect of it: how has the game changed from your perspective and let's stay with the men's game for now. When you were growing up, as opposed to what you're seeing players having to go through now?

MG: You know I think, I played center-mid, I'm five eight, which is small. I don't know that I could play today. I think it was more technical, more skill-driven than maybe athletic driven in some respects. Now when I see college teams and all the guys are six foot-something.

GL: They're huge.

MG: Yeah, I don't know that I would have the opportunity to play where I did. To me that's the biggest change. I think it just was more of a skill game, now I think it's more of athletic game, we can cover more ground, we can play more direct. Not saying it's good or bad, but the American side it seems to be the way that we have been heading.

GL: Interesting observation. So what influenced you to become, to coach? You mentioned earlier that you were also a men's coach and what led you into coaching?

MG: Yeah. Got out of college, actually went in the Air Force for a couple of years, got out of there, didn't know what to do and it just drew me back in. I started, I was in Tennessee, I was a high school teacher, coached a boys and girls' soccer teams. I guess that's where I started to get back into it.

GL: Where in Tennessee?

MG: Outside of Franklin, Tennessee, a little tiny school, outside of Nashville is a town called Franklin where my wife's from. And I had gone back and I had been doing camps at Vanderbilt, which was, I had a good friend who was a women's coach at Vanderbilt. And I had coached club teams throughout the years. But high school, I loved it, I thought high school was great. You know, I did it for two years and then I went into the college game, sometimes wished I had stayed at the high school level because it was a lot of fun, but I guess that was my first experience at high school and then from there it just went into college.

GL: And when you went into college coaching, was that when you first started coaching women's on the collegiate level?

MG: Yes, I took a job at Lakeland College at Lakeland College in Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

GL: Okay.

MG: And coached the men and the women at the college level. And then from there my good friend the job at Oklahoma and great opportunity, asked me to come with him.

GL: Norman or?

MG: In Norman, University of Oklahoma so,

GL: Okay.

MG: So I got to go there, you know, so I did the men's side but just for two years and then at the college level, and then I just went and then from then on out it was just the women's side since, to '98. It's hard to remember that far back. So it's been the women's side for a long time

GL: Do you recall meeting a guy named Brian Harvey?

MG: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

GL: Brian. So when he coached the Oklahoma City Slickers of the American Soccer League, that's who I was playing for.

MG: Okay.

GL: That was coach Harvey.

MG: I know exactly who he is, yeah.

GL: I think he's in Bethany, or last I heard he was at one of the Christian schools?

MG: He was at Oklahoma University when I was there. Does a fantastic job, I remember we scrimmaged them, I don't know if we won or not, it was a really good game. But absolutely I remember him, yeah, a good guy.

GL: A demanding coach.

MG: yeah he was, yeah.

GL: We was a good coach, yeah he was excellent. But yeah he didn't have a lot of time to fool around.

MG: Yeah, oh I know exactly who he is.

GL: What were some of the more memorable moments of being a male coach for a women's team? That transition time when you're...

MG: There's just such a big difference, coaching men and women. I know that when I used to coach both and we would do double-headers, it was, I had to be two different people, you know, you coach the men's game and, the way you speak to them is not the way I would talk to the women, so I would switch personalities basically. Biggest transition coaching women? I think they listen more. But I also think you need to be really careful of what you say because they'll quote it back to you ten years later. So to me those, you know, like a guy doesn't remember what you said to him a minute ago. So I think you can coach more, you know, on the men's side athletically they can get away with more mistakes than on the women's side. So you have to really develop tactics and things a little more than you would on the men's side. So it's different, it's like two different sports.

GL: yeah, that's an interesting inside. How has Women's Soccer developed in terms of the players over the years since you first began. How are you seeing the development of the female soccer player? I think we can throw a national net on that question.

MG: Yeah, I mean I think Title IX and my wife's a product of Title IX really put money into the Women's side of sports, and has allowed the women's athletes to develop. I think a good example is, you know, our U.S. Women's team is always very, very successful. I think part of it is the environment, they get to play at the college level before they can play on the National team and our Olympic development teams and all that kind of stuff. But I don't know. You know my wife, my wife was basically on the National Team pool so we have this conversation often. And my wife is five foot nothing You know, and played center-back and it's that same thing, I guess I've said on the men's side where I think we have relied on the fact that we're phenomenally athletic, on the women's side and that's given us success and it does, we're successful. So you can't argue it, but then I've watched teams like the French women's team played this past summer, or the Germans or a lot of other teams, the Japanese and technically they're brilliant. We normally still win on the women's side because we're more athletic, and I guess it would be nice if we could find a little more of a balance on the technical side.

GL: Okay, that still, you mentioned the French team, that strike against England that their, oh my god, that ball's still, still probably flying. Good lord that was a good strike.

MG: Yeah, yeah.

GL: Yeah that's, there was a lot of skill shown this summer in that tournament, a fantastic tournament. The opportunities for playing for women since you've been coaching has obviously changed. Could you expand on that in terms of specific, if you're thinking about a young girl entering the game today in the single digits, seven, eight, nine. What would be her normal progression to make it to the collegiate level and maybe, ultimately the national level?

MG: Well I think the opportunities are unlimited on the women's side. I think it's actually harder now on the men's side. Which is why I switch to just coaching women years ago because you could see that avenue opening up for women. I guess the first part is try to find a good club team, a local club team with coaches that can really break down and teach you the proper techniques at an early age. I think that's necessary and in most places you have that. And keep the fun in it so they don't want to quit and they want to develop and want to learn and. But the club teams are what get you into college. A good high school team that's hit and miss, it depends where you live so there's no real, you know, college coaches don't go watch high school teams. So Olympic development and good club teams that can go play at big tournaments is where the coaches are. Also with today's technology I mean we get stuff on our phones everyday with live videos from...

GL: Oh really?

MG: So it's really convenient now with travel wise I don't have to go so far cause it comes right to me. But I think the biggest thing is kind of knowing what you want to do by ninth grade be at a level where you can go play on some bigger showcases. There's obviously tons of people that want to play but there's also so many opportunities. Every school has it, the funding, the support grows every year on the women's side, for women's soccer especially. I mean I've watched it grow with my own program and you know, from maybe me trying to do it all to me getting some financial support for a part-time assistant who, finally getting an athletic trainer that's with us

and the development and it takes time, it's all a process but the opportunities I think are endless if you have someone help advise you where to look and what direction to turn and...

GL: Are you seeing the younger players, are they locked into a position earlier on or is it still fairly fluid?

MG: Yeah, yeah, no I do see that. Not everywhere but a lot of players are locked, this is what I am, this is what I do, this is where I play philosophy. But not all, but most of the kids I recruit are shocked when I recruit them and say, "Well that's not where you're going to play here." Because a lot of your best, and I don't think I'm different than anyone else. My keeper's my keeper, obviously. But most of your better players are your center-forward, your center-back, and your center-mid. So generally those are, I like interchangeable players anyway. When we play in games, I switch them around. I want them to, you're playing outside back trying to play a forward and don't understand why the forward is making a run that you don't think is correct. I just switch them for five minutes and then the defender will go, "Oh-kay, I see." And then I'll put them back and it makes more sense for them.

GL: Like Dutch-total football.

MG: Yeah a little bit, I mean generally it's in exhibition games or if we have a lead or it's in scrimmages but I think if you don't play all the spots you don't understand what's truly required of you, a little bit. You assume that you think you know, and it look easy and you don't understand why your teammate's not doing a certain thing until you're in that spot so.

GL: Nice philosophy. So what brought you to NMU and the Upper Peninsula?

MG: I was coaching at Oklahoma. We were cutting through the U.P. to go recruit a Canadian player. The honest answer is I didn't know there was a U.P. I honestly, I didn't know where we were, Wisconsin, Michigan, I was just driving. And we drove through Marquette and my wife and I looked around and thought, "Wow, it's like going back in time." It's beautiful. And I think maybe eight or nine years later a job came open here and we applied and some people thought why would you want to do that, but it's just a beautiful place to live. And so we're real happy we came.

GL: What year was that?

MG: 2003 or 2004, sorry it's one of those two. So...

GL: Well, I, again personal experience. I recall the first time kicking a ball around out on the practice field on your practice field when I was still playing and looking over and seeing the lake and the pine trees and then a deer ran across the field and I was like, alright. That's a new one, that's a first.

MG: Oh yeah we have had teams running laps out there with the deer that joins in the back. We've had a bear run across the field. But where else can you play that freighters are coming right by your field, there's a beach across the street.

GL: Yeah, it doesn't happen.

MG: It's just, it's a unique place that, once you find it, it's hard to leave.

GL: Yeah, yeah. So if you could, based upon your knowledge of the NMU's Women's Soccer team, you indicated it was a product of Title IX. When do you know it began and where's your rank in terms of coaching? Are you the first, second, third?

MG: I'm the third coach. I'm pretty sure I'm the third coach. I'm not sure the exact year it started, mid '90s.

GL: Okay.

MG: Oh, Milton Braga, who is the Assistant Women's Swim Coach right now started the program.

GL: Oh really?

MG: I think he was only the coach for maybe a year or two and the Carl Greggor, I think for four or five years before me, so I'd say seven or eight years before I came there had been a program here.

GL: Then when you arrived, what was your take on the team and the initial team strengths and weaknesses of the players, of the U.P. players and the recruiting area?

MG: It was a, it was a transition time I would say because when I got here there were sixty-something people on the roster, which I didn't know until I got here, which was a shock.

GL: That's a big roster.

MG: Yeah. Yeah, and what they did was they had a J.V. team but the J.V. team didn't play anybody except they played the boy's high school freshmen on Monday nights. So my impression when I showed up was that we'd have more success if we changed how we did that. Now it's, that's what they were told to do before hand and that's why they were doing it so it is what it is. But I helped suggest that we start a women's club team. Made a lot of people probably angry at me and basically cut the roster in half and made a club team. And now we have a women's club team that, and a smaller roster for our team. So I guess those were the beginning adjustments to how we were going to try to progress.

GL: Skill wise?

MG: I thought the skill level was good. I thought there were some fantastically skilled players. I played against Northern Michigan when I was coaching at North Dakota. And I don't know that maybe fitness wasn't where it should be because I thought they were more skillful but as time wore on we got the win and that was my observation before I came. So we've progressed more to a year-round training program. I think maybe it wasn't fully year-round at that point. But there was good players here. And I don't think much different skill level than now really, I just think maybe the social scene was as important as the soccer scene at that time.

GL: Huh. So you've mentioned the preparation level of local players now, if, where you've gone to year-round. The players that you're pulling out of the Upper Peninsula if we could kind



of focus on them specifically. What are they receiving in terms of playing preparation and skill development?

MG: They're behind. Part of it is just where we live. Part of it is the local kids tend to play every sport which is great, but there's not a year round opportunity to really train up here. I mean it's hit and miss. There's one group that does it and you have two different side. You have the travel and rec local league which is generally run by parents, and they're great people but they're not at the level, soccer-wise to really develop players. And so it's hard, so you tend to get people who dedicate their time and work really hard but they have to look up a video and then try to go make that happen with the kids. And the kids suffer from that. So the kids that I recruit are usually very good athletes but they're usually behind.

GL: Are there indoor opportunities for these players in the U.P. or is it?

MG: It comes and goes throughout the years. It's just so hit and miss. The only real facility that's ever been there is the Dome. But the Dome's heavily used so, and it's been hard and it's also not a culture of wanting to spend money to get developed for soccer in the U.P. For hockey, that's fine, they don't bat an eye, they'll go pay the fees, get the training. Most places you live, like me as a college coach, when I went to Norman Oklahoma when I got there the club, the Norman Fury which is a really good club called me and said, "Look, we want you to coach this team. Here's what we'll pay you, you're the trainer for this, you don't have to travel. You're training the '97s or whatever age group. Which is normal everywhere. All my buddies that coach also coached the local club team. That's not the case here. They don't see it that way. So it's unique in that there are people up here that could help train them but they'd rather not have that, unless it's free.

GL: Yeah, yeah. Those days I think are gone.

MG: Yeah.

GL: What high school, what women's, what high schools offer women's football, soccer?

MG: Not a lot. Marquette, Kingsford, Iron Mountain, and that might be it. I think there's one further north, I'm just not sure which school, up in the Keweenaw, I think just started one. And so that's the challenge. Who do they play? Now Dan Liebert who is the women's coach, I think has done a great job in a no-win position of...

GL: Is he, what school is Dan in?

MG: He's at Marquette High School. He's been there many, many, many years. This past year he took his team down to, played a lot of Wisconsin tournaments. And they did great, they did really well. They have a, Marquette High School actually right now, this past year had a really good team. A lot of talented kids that had played together. I actually, I coached a lot of those kids for the last two summers with Lyle I know I'm not going to say his last name right, Zablockil. I would take them to showcases over the summer because I have to go recruit anyways so I would just coach them and take them with me and these are kids that are juniors and seniors in high school and it's their first experience at a showcase. Which in some ways is

fortunate because a lot of them might have been recruited to go elsewhere. But it's also not fortunate because they were good kids that hadn't gotten seen by people that would have helped them get more scholarship opportunities.

GL: I see. That's a limited draw. Three or four schools.

MG: Yeah so it was a lot of travel and they pay for it. The school doesn't pay for it. It's not considered a funded sport for boys or girls high school.

GL: So besides the local players that you tend to keep an eye on, where do you recruit from, geographically?

MG: Yeah, I mean all over. Obviously, Wisconsin, to me has good soccer on the men's and women's side and it's close. I like this team called Allouez, which is actually a team out of Green Bay. But I guess Mel Buckmaster is originally from Allouez, which for years I didn't realize wasn't a town in the U.P. They, I probably have six or seven players from that team, think it does a great job. But you know you have Milwaukee, you have Chicago, all in this region. I have a lot of Michigan players, but I don't go do lower Michigan, I usually watch them play in Iowa at a giant showcase where most of them go to for big club tournaments. So that's it, and I mean, and Minnesota. So Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan would be just the region, the closest region that we recruit.

GL: Canucks or internationals? Sorry, Canadians or Internationals?

MG: I have two Swedes, I've had lots of Canadians throughout the years. I don't right now mainly because on the Canadian side they're starting to offer women's scholarships. So they've changed the playing field where we used to always go over there and take good Canadian soccer players.

GL: From Ontario mostly or?

MG: Yep or basically from their provincial teams we would go, so which is their Olympic development teams is their provincial teams, and we would get the best players from Manitoba or the best players from Saskatchewan or whatever and it was easy to do because they didn't have money or even teams sometimes at the college level, where now they're starting to fund them and starting to give them scholarships so it's getting harder to convince a player to come over when they don't need to. But yeah, internationally, yeah I have two Swedes, I've had Norwegians. It's hit and miss a little bit. You always look, but there's pros and cons. They're good players but you have to give them a lot more scholarship money because it's expensive to come.

GL: Is their skill level noticeably different than native players or is it again that hit and miss that you?

MG: I think it is a little hit and miss. I have a Swedish player right now who's technically brilliant. She's the best player I have, skill-wise by far. From Malmö, Sweden. And I'd like to say that I found her, but it's all connections and someone else found her and told me about her. And I convinced her to come and her teammate came, who's a goal-keeper. And the goal-keeper

is very technically developed as well. And it's funny, it's that same thing, it's, we have Americans who are more athletic, which is better. Now the Swedish player that plays in the field is fantastic. She could play division I at a higher level and fit in great. So we're fortunate to have her. And the goal-keeper shares time with an American who is more athletic than she is. But the Swedish player is much more developed technically than the American player.

GL: Sweden's Women's program Pia Sundhage out of that and now she's back over there, a women's national coach and I've always as far back as I can remember, they've always had challenging female teams. That would make sense that they were technical.

MG: Yeah, yeah.

GL: Let's see, where am I, I had an, oh. You're division II, we're division II in the U?

MG: Yes

GL: Um-hmm, that's what I thought. You kind of answered that. This is, how does the U.P. or Marquette support, what's the level of support that the NMU Women's Soccer receives from the community, outside the university?

MG: There's a tight knit group of people that I can go to for anything. And that, I think soccer people are soccer people and we all help each other out so. What's neat is we're finally, I think, starting to see through many years of doing clinics and camps and soccer schools or whatever, a lot of these kids and the young kids coming out to games, I think we had a really good turnout last home game or a couple home games ago we had, well we had, they were cooking out, tons of kids out there. And we're doing that again on Halloween, our last game. So I think it's going in the right direction. I think it all ties into we needed a facility, which took a long time to develop so it started to become a stadium, so it started to become an attraction. And I think we needed to get that done to get the people out there involved. And so I think, and it takes a long time to get there and starting to see it this year, and just a big local following of mainly kids which want to come watch our games, which I think is great.

GL: The stadium, the pitch, the facility that is becoming quite a showplace. It's nice to see.

MG: And we need bleachers, we need permanent, but that's the next step. Everything's a step, it all takes money, and it's all process. But I think adding the men's team, there's pros and cons there, but the pros are that will help develop and add to the facility which will add to the attraction of being a part of it, I hope.

GL: Yeah, okay that just kind of dawned on me. Both are fall sport.

MG: Yep, it's going to be double-headers.

GL: It's going to be juggling.

MG: Yeah, it's going to be two games, so hopefully we can get to the point, we're the only team sport at Northern that doesn't sell tickets. Most schools we go to sell tickets. We're the one sport that's not on live web or live camera that you can watch the game on, on your computer. But those are coming. And it needs to happen and when it happens you now have an atmosphere to

really develop the fan base. I don't think, you can only develop it to so far if you don't have the seats, you don't fill them, you don't have tickets. So it's all been steps to get there, but I can see it. It's not far off. It's two, three years down the road, all that will be done, and then who knows where it will go.

GL: Is there any specific reasons why the women's soccer team is, I don't want to say marginalized, but isn't receiving revenue like the other sports? Maybe that's a better way of putting it.

MG: No I mean I think it's, our sport is a mystery to this part of the country a little bit, maybe. I know with my administrators and all honesty, it's, we're that sport that they don't know or understand.

GL: That's something I would have expected to hear in 1970.

MG: Yeah.

GL: And not 2015.

MG: That would again be a great example of why the U.P. is a great place to live, but it's fifty years behind in the sport that I like. It just is. It's, I remember being really young and being in Tennessee visiting and soccer was that backwards sport that you didn't play.

GL: Right.

MG: It's still in a lot of ways here that same culture, but it's changing, it's really picking up pace as it's changing but it's way overdue and it's behind and we suffer that up here, the lack of knowledge of our sport.

GL: Yeah I can remember Tennessee and Kentucky being behind, and those days are gone now.

MG: They're way gone, the only place still left in the U.S. is here.

GL: [chuckles] Oh!

MG: And I love it, and I'm just being honest. And like my Swedish kids who play they're like, they ask me all the time, "Is this how it is in your country?" And I say, "No. This is how it is in the U.P." You get out of the U.P. and soccer is important, it's big, it's still just, it's that sport and it's picking up pace and picking up speed. But it's a process, it's gone from fifty years behind to maybe ten, but it's, that's been the most challenging aspect, for me, living here and coaching here.

GL: Yeah. I remember, I came from a football family. Not to digress into me, but I think this story's funny, it still amuses me. And my brothers all played football and the coaches, I'm the youngest, and the coaches are all excited they're getting another Logan to play football. And halfway there I say, "I'm going to play soccer." And I remember my football coach said, "So you're going to play that communist-football?" [Chuckles]

MG: Yeah. Yeah, well I will give you an example, just so you know. Oh I'd say three months ago, at the most, by a football coach, I was called the exact same thing.

GL: Communist football?

MG: I was called a communist because I, yeah, because I coach soccer. And I've heard that when I was nine, but to hear that now

GL: Yeah. I thought I was throwing something fifty years old, forty years old!

MG: It happened here within the last three months and I kind of turned around and went, "Wow, we're still there." But, so most places have moved on and we're still working our way there. But we will.

GL: I think that kind of addresses this next question unless you want to expound upon it. What was the level of support the team gets from the university?

MG: Uh...

GL: Maybe I should, let me rephrase that. How could the university better support the team?

MG: Well I think, really the reality is this. If you want an NCAA Tournament team year after year after year, it's not a question of how hard you work, it's a question of resources. If we had an Assistant Coach position, I think we'd have been there years ago and been there every year because it's a great place to live, great place to bring people. I coach more kids than anyone at this school, and teach. And I love it but the progression is if you want a caliber team, you need to have more people helping get the job done. So I think that's what it comes down to and I think, actually Forest a new idea, I think gets it and he's trying to work in that direction, I don't know how...

GL: That's the Athletic Director?

MG: Yep.

GL: Okay

MG: And I don't know how quickly it'll come but I think he recognizes that. So I don't think it's far off, but that's what needs to happen. You can have expectations of what you want and not give us the resources or facilities or anything else, and that's not reality. And for some years we pulled it off with smoke and mirrors a little bit, but long term you need a, I need an assistant. I think the coaches before me did a great job laying the groundwork and hopefully we'd have taken it a little bit further but there just needs, the NCAA Tournaments always has a couple coaches that show up with their team,

GL: Oh yeah.

MG: Not just me on a bus. Especially because of where we're located. You don't just get in your car and go watch a game. You've got to go pretty far so, and I think that will come, you know. So is the support there? I think Forest has been here a couple of years and he's had a lot of learning to do about Northern Michigan. And I think he's had a lot of progress and a lot of success for most sports, so I have high hopes he's going to get the team the support it needs to really be successful.

GL: These, your current group of players, what do they bring to the game? And I think this will hit on athleticism and, I don't want to put words in your mouth. So this current group of players you have, what do they bring to the game that previous generations that you've observed perhaps didn't?

MG: You know, it is that same thing. Well I, I am that odd coach that I recruit little kids, I don't care if they're not big, I want people that can play soccer. But I've also mixed it up and some are just more athlete than soccer player. I guess the athleticism continues to evolve and become a bigger part of the game. I think that's the biggest change. Yeah, I don't, yeah.

GL: Has their understanding of the game, the knowledge of the game changed with it being so ubiquitous?

MG: It's become more direct and more simplified and little less like playing chess, maybe? A little less seeing what you're going to do three plays down the road. But in all fairness it also depends on the level of club, team you're recruiting from

GL: Okay

MG: Where you can get the best kids off the best clubs and they can, they're brilliant. It's just hard to get them up here, so what we've always tried to do is to get athletes and really, really coach and try to develop their awareness and understanding. That for us has been more successful, but yeah, I think the change has just become more physical, more direct, more a little bit like rugby, in my opinion. Where the way it's played now wasn't necessarily the way it's played, I think, back when I played. And that could just be a regional thing, maybe this region is just more physical and more direct than California or Florida or somewhere like that which is a little more passing a little more skill-drive.

GL: I would have probably played better up here. With that understanding [Both laugh]

MG: I don't think I'd have had much of a chance.

GL: We've talked about the secondary schools and recruiting and developing players, what is the potential of, if we leave the schools, the club soccer programs in the area, what is their potential in developing and promoting the game? Are there women's clubs programs?

MG: No, there's not in the U.P., it's just, there's Superiorland Soccer Association which is rec and travel. And there are some club teams, boys and girls, and they do the best they can but again it's not, it's not paid coaches, it's parent volunteers. So it's hit and miss, there's some coaches that do a great job, but it's also I think a thing of, because it's so small winning is more important than developing, so they'll go to the local small tournaments and have success instead of really trying to develop and trying to reach out maybe to some bigger tournaments and see where they really are.

GL: I see.

MG: And then, to me the joy of soccer was the development of the game and getting better and better as a player. Even when I was a kid, I think that's the trick. So they can go to Appleton and

win showcases or they could go a little further and see that they could develop their players further, which would help them at the next level, because Marquette's loaded with great young athletic kids. And they're hungry to develop, and I think it's an avenue that can really be and needs to be developed.

GL: Or would an academy? Is that the word? Are there Academies?

MG: There is an Academy.

GL: For women?

MG: It's for boys and girls and it's Norm Powers started it, and I think it's called Marquette Soccer Academy now.

GL: I had no idea it's still around. Okay.

MG: And I think it's still around but I don't think it's heavily attended because that's the U.P. women's, no I shouldn't say women's, soccer in the U.P., they don't want to pay the money for so your choices are playing for the Marquette Soccer Academy which might be considered a normal expense somewhere else is considered pretty high here.

GL: I see

MG: And then on the other side you have the travel teams that are free, but run by parents, and there's no middle ground. We've tried to do middle ground running soccer camps and soccer schools but to limited success because we've, and we've charged practically nothing, we've just covered expenses. But we tend to not have huge numbers, maybe fifty, sixty kids. Which might sound like a lot but it's not really, it's mainly just real, real young kids that show up.

GL: When you speak of a middle ground I'm thinking of ethnic organizations in Chicago, Milwaukee and the kids aren't necessarily ethnic anymore, but the ethnic organization still has some money where they could put into developing that. Is there, is that still a viable option in terms of recruiting for you? Do you see kids coming out of the ethnic clubs or are they out of more academies and high schools?

MG: Now a days more out of academies, you know, not so much high schools only because of the recruiting dollar that you get, so for me if I'm going to go travel, I'm going to watch a showcase of games of twenty teams playing for two straight days. And I'm going to sit out there from sunrise to sunset. Whereas going to a high school game, an eighty minute game which is what they play at most high school places now. On a tiny, narrow football field, usually.

GL: Right

MG: Yeah, I just don't get the value we would get recruiting wise, so and that's just for me because of where I'm located. If I were in a more populous area I'm sure I would go recruit high school. A great example of that is Michigan Tech recruits I think solely high school almost. And they have a very good team. Their Assistant is also conveniently the women's high school coach in Central Wisconsin. So he recruits while he's doing his season all spring and all those girls go play up at Tech in the fall.

GL: I see.

MG: So, but for me, ethnic groups, if I lived near a big city I would think absolutely, that's probably something that would be a great opportunity for recruiting. I'm just too far removed from that to really have any feel.

GL: I guess Milwaukee would be the closest place.

MG: Yeah.

GL: So you have had, personally, I was going to, I lost my place. Yeah, I kind of looked at your results here at NMU and I've been aware of them and I think it's a fair assessment that your teams are competitive, if anything. You're in a dog-fight whenever I see scores, and the games I have seen. What would it take to make NMU's soccer team, I think you kind of said this, but what would it take to make it a consistent, elite team of the NCAA Division II?

MG: Yeah I think we've been competitive is a good way of putting it. How do you get past that? You know? A couple of years ago I thought we did pretty well for a couple of years. And I remember going in and saying look, we can stay here, but this is the help I need to stay here. If not it'll, will go back down and come back up. But really, you need a, I need help. I have to train keepers, mid-fielders, defenders, and forwards.

GL: If you could get an Assistant Coach what would you look for in that? An all-around Assistant Coach or a position-specific coach?

MG: No, I think all-around or part of me wouldn't mind having a goal-keeper coach. I played center-mid, I'm not a goal-keeper, I mean.

GL: Goal-keeper coaches are nice.

MG: Yeah, yeah. I mean I've gotten better at it over the years but it's not my specialty and it never will be. But it doesn't necessarily need to be that but honestly I think that's what we are looking for as we're adding the men's team, our goal is to start off by adding a full time goal keeper coach that will do both men's and women's goal-keepers

GL: Okay.

MG: And help with recruiting for both. And that would be the first step, and that would really help both programs. The second step would be we'd like to each have our own assistant, which would be nice. It's like, I will go out at four o'clock today and I will coach twenty-nine girls. And it's not necessarily fair to them, because they don't get the training they could get, they don't get the one-on-one time that would help them develop further if we had the resources. And that's what it takes, if you want to be at the top level you got to develop your players. It's that simple, there's only so much time in a day and the more, where we live it's hard. You can't necessarily walk down the road and find someone who can bring in, that can help you. There's limited people up here that can come help. So, you know, part-time money doesn't necessarily give you someone that can come and help every day.



GL: Thinking back on your career here, what would be one of the more memorable matches you've been able to coach, and your teams have played in that was a bit of a dog fight that you all came out on top?

MG: I guess my favorite would be, we played Ferris State on a Friday and my Captain and Center-mid actually got red-carded. And then on Sunday we were playing Grand Valley who hadn't lost, I think, six years, at all to anybody. I remember thinking, "Bad enough but now my best kids are going to sit out and not play. And then we beat them on Sunday and they hadn't lost in forever so. I think that was probably my favorite and it was just a tribute to the girls that, I think a lot of teams see a team, and we're playing them this weekend.

GL: Yeah you got both of those teams coming up this weekend.

MG: And a lot of teams you know, they see these teams and they don't, they get intimidated and maybe don't compete. And I was just proud of the way they didn't bat and eye, they just, Grand Valley was better nine out of ten times they win. Maybe nineteen out of twenty, but that's probably my favorite. And then, it's funny, I learned afterwards apparently that was my one hundredth victory, which I didn't realize. Or maybe one hundredth here, I don't remember where it was, but the kids gave me a plaque next day which I thought was really neat.

GL: Oh, how cool. Yeah.

MG: So that stood out as really special, special game.

GL: Yeah. Are those the two top teams in Michigan for Women's Soccer?

MG: Grand Valley always is, Grand Valley's National Champs just about every single year. They're above and beyond everyone else in the conference in soccer. Whoever is, Ferris is having a fantastic year and is right behind them, but I don't know. Ohio-Dominican is usually right up there as well. Ferris is usually good. Usually Ferris and us are similar though, so we see their record and we see our record but I, I don't honestly see a big difference. Maybe I'll tell you something different Saturday, but I think we can compete well with them.

GL: It should be a good game. Going in there with five victories under your belt, you know they're playing with confidence, obviously.

MG: Yeah, we're playing better. It doesn't hurt that my two center-mids were out for the first five games. And then they're back, and they're coming off of injuries, serious injuries, so I'm still slowly working them into the games. Maybe they're up to sixty, seventy minutes but that has played a large part of it.

GL: Sure. If we could kind of leave the U.P. here. No, let's not leave the U.P. I do have one more question for you. What would you, what would be a typical practice? I kind of, this is if someone's looking at this tape or listening to this tape thirty, forty years from now. What would be a typical practice for a Women's Soccer team up here in the U.P.?

MG: Okay. Well, during the regular season we practice four to five thirty, an hour and a half, that's it. We don't go longer. Sometimes even a little bit shorter, but the girls warm up by

themselves, I come out and I start right at four o'clock. Every practice is similar in that there's always some skill work, there's always a lot of possession, about twenty minutes of playing possession soccer, just different ways of working on keeping the ball. From there we maybe we would talk about upcoming games a little bit, and maybe on a Wednesday which today is we would do about twenty minutes of full field, just to replicate what we expect to do this weekend against the teams we're playing. And they enjoy that because some of my kids don't travel and some of my kids maybe don't play that much, so Wednesdays is their opportunity to get a little game in that they enjoy. Probably end with some shooting, give the keeper some work. Then we leave in the morning on another trip. We've been home for three days, we just got back from a four day trip. But it's generally the same. It's possession, I'm very big on possession and keeping the ball in training. So there's a lot of that, there's a lot of working on your vision, working on your touches. How many touches can we get in a practice? So when we develop training sessions it's how often can I find a creative way to keep them getting as many touches as they can. And then also this part of the year, this time of the year it's how can you make it unique and different and keep them wanting to come back for more. You know, it's that time, they're tired.

GL: Sure.

MG: And so, we try to fit all that into an hour and a half.

GL: Do you move inside when the weather becomes inclement up here or do you?

MG: No, we're outside always.

GL: Lace'em up and off we go?

MG: Yeah. Part of it is, you know, football would be in there so we couldn't really go in anyway unless we scheduled it for later, but then inter-murals are in there. There's always someone in there. And part of it's our home field advantage. We train and play in everything. Late in the year if it's really, really nasty at home we usually already know we've won, because we're used to it. On the opposite side and you go to Ohio and it's ninety-two on their turf, you know. It's a struggle, but no, we're always outside.

GL: What do you see for the future of the program specifically in the U.P.?

MG: I think it's growing, I think it's growing in the town I think the University's growing, I think whoever takes over the Women's team is going to take them to the next level. It's what I see happening. I think our administration is really finally helping us get where we need to be. I see nothing but good stuff. I'd see within five years men's and women's soccer being very successful, I mean consistently successful. And I'm looking forward to seeing that.

GL: Yeah. Nationally the Women's National team has consistently ranked these lofty positions and I think this last World Cup and you've spoke to this already, a little bit. The rest of the world's catching up, it is some dynamic soccer. What's it going to take for the United States to retain that lofty position and does that same trend mirror itself in the U.P.?

MG: Yeah, I think it does. I think it mirrors itself on the men's side as well in that I, on the women's side money has started to flow, to develop, in the U.S. women playing sports is normal. It's expected, you see it everywhere, you go to other countries and it's surprising that the women are playing or they don't get much or, but you know, now all the Premier League teams have a women's team. There's, you know, the Swedish women's teams are fantastic. All over the, it's all over the country now it's growing and because they've been so successful, it's, they're starting to get paid to play over there. They're starting to be able to make a living over there playing. For us to, I think stay where we are, we need to find a way to develop our skill level a little bit more than we do instead of relying on our athletic ability, or it's going to catch up with us because that's what it is right now, it's technically brilliant players against world-class athletes. And, you know, you see on the men's when the men's played Mexico and the Mexican team technically was brilliant and the men's team was very athletic.

GL: Mexico has solid mid-field didn't they?

MG: Yeah.

GL: Oh my god!

MG: So.

GL: That was, yeah, that was.

MG: So, I don't know, but I mean to me that's, and I don't know the answer and I don't think anyone does. I don't know how to get there to make that happen but I think at some point relying on athletic ability will be the downfall if we don't develop a little more of an awareness of the game. I don't know if it's a cultural thing that, you know, I grew up, I know baseball frontwards-backwards-sideways and I'm not, I've done soccer most of my life and I could probably meet a ten year old from another country who would have a better understanding of it, I almost feel.

GL: Wow.

MG: You know just cause it's their culture, it's their, but maybe we're heading there. We have what, professional leagues now that are doing great, but that comes and goes too. So I don't know.

GL: Yeah. Twenty years, hopefully this one will stick around.

MG: Yeah.

GL: Last but not least, is there anything you'd like to add to this, Matt?

MG: No. I mean, thank you for the opportunity.

GL: thank you.

MG: It's nice to be able just to spout out about something you like!

GL: It is. Okay. I'll go ahead and conclude the interview and thank you very much Matt.

MG: Thank you.

END OF AUDIO