

A true footballer Jimmy Conway was a lifetime participant, educator and student of the game. While around the world he was best known for his professional career and World Cup play, here in Oregon, his real impact was made during his 28 years as the State Director of Coaching for Oregon Youth Soccer Association (OYSA).

“Jimmy was always a friend and I always looked forward to seeing him when I dropped by the OYSA office. I enjoyed watching him play as well but my bond with him was through his care and commitment to us whenever I needed insight, advice and help.”

-Long time OYSA Club President and Coach-

To all ages his love of the game was infectious, and his outreach left no corner of the state without opportunity to develop and play. Jimmy was a true grassroots visionary helping Oregon's underserved communities implement coaching education, develop players and teams, find land for fields, and grow the sport. In his 28 years with OYSA Jimmy was instrumental in the addition of 73 new clubs that brought over 35 thousand players to the OYSA family.

While initially players, fans and coaches were drawn to him by reputation and fame, it was his true unwavering character that turned acquaintances into lifelong, students, friends, and believers. Jimmy's Kool-Aid, on and off the pitch, was full of commitment, vision, and hard work, and every drink would leave you thirsty for more. He found joy in coaching every level of play, and his ability to effortlessly adapt to the precise needs of the group introduced a level of coaching the state had yet to see. In his 28 years as the State Director of Coaching Jimmy coached kick-n-chase. recreational teams, TOPSoccer programs, select and premier teams, a girls freshman high school team, ODP, college and professional players; and nationally licensed over 11 hundred coaches.

Like magic Jimmy brought something special out of everyone he worked with, and when you watched him coach you knew right away he was doing exactly what he was made to do. His players would say he held them to the highest of moral and physical standards, and he expected nothing but their best every day. Jimmy had the ability to turn an average team into winners and for him this always started with being the fittest team on the pitch. One player remembered their first day of training at Oregon State University, where Jimmy started the men's program in 1988;

“I remember my first training session at Oregon State. Jimmy had told us to get our runners on for warm-up. We ran around the outskirts of campus, about 2.5 miles, and being a goalkeeper, I was thankful to see the field after about 20 minutes, but as the team stopped and put our hands on our knees to catch our breath Jimmy kept going. We did 2 more laps, for our “warm-up”, that day with the entire last lap being a fartlek. With about 100 yards to finish Jimmy turned around and said something like, let's go boys. With what little energy each of us had left we all took off in a sprint, but like most days to come Coach beat us to the pitch that day... he was sprinting backwards. I thought that must be it for the day, but we practiced for 2 more hours with Coach working right beside us demonstrating and coaching the entire time.”

- Former Oregon State Player-

On a daily basis, for almost 3 generations, Jimmy's love of life, friends, and soccer filled the OYSA offices with laughter as he brought an element of fun to a long day's work. He forever united a group of once strangers showing them how to not take life too seriously, to do the right thing and remember for who and why they do it, to help and stand up for one another, and have integrity in all that you do.

From the OYSA Board and Staff: Jimmy we thank you for sharing yourself with all of us. Your memory and influence will forever be a part of our soccer community. May you Rest In Peace.

A Catholic funeral Mass will be held Tuesday, Feb. 25 at 1 p.m. in St. Mary's Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, 1716 NW Davis Street, Portland. A reception will follow at the Multnomah Athletic Club, 1849 SW Salmon St., Portland.