

## TIM STRAYER STORY OF HOW HE GOT INVOLVED!

My wife played Soccer at Bluffton University and the University of Toledo. When we began having children, four daughters, it became a foregone conclusion that they would play soccer. When she first signed the girls up for Rec soccer she mentioned to the coordinator that she had played in college and would help coach if they needed. Of course, they needed help of someone who had played. She came home and told me what she had said and I knew that she would be coaching, and I would be assisting her. Little did I know that I would be taking over while her rotating night shift routine made it impossible for her to make all the practices and games. That was nearly 10 years ago. Rec left some things to be desired, and that led us to club soccer. The environment of club soccer was something unnerving for two very protective parents that sheltered their kids. It was very eye opening to listen to the other girls and the things they spoke of at even a young age. The other parents were average hard working parents just like us, but their worldview clearly was not centered around church and Christ like ours and our normal surroundings. It became clear that this was the environment we were meant to shine light into. The two oldest played club soccer while we still coached Rec. Then, I made one of the biggest jumps of my life (up until then anyhow) and offered to coach club soccer at a small club. Suddenly, I found myself responsible for two club teams. I figured I would get to jump in softly, but that's not how it worked out. It was very overwhelming. Coaching at a secular club again was tempered with the knowledge that it was a ministry field. However, I didn't feel released to do things as I had with Christian Service Brigade or any other youth or children's ministry I had been a part of. It was an instant struggle within.

Scheduling our first season I came across a team in Adrian on my schedule that was familiar, but I couldn't put a finger on who they were or why the name seemed familiar. I decided to search the web to find out if they had a website or not. Then it hit me, FCA Tigers. This coach I was scheduling with was going to be able to coach the way I wanted to, because it was FCA. I instantly emailed the coach to let her know that I was envious of her. Her response was appropriate as she poured on how great it was and explained the blessing it would be to coach with Christ as the foundation. I truly was jealous, but I resolved to love on my players as though they were my own and encouraged the parents to let me know if they needed any help with anything. Without using the normal "church ministry model" I didn't know what else to do but that. It was successful. My teams grew from two to three teams after year one and we added 10 players through the season the second year. We continued to hear from people how impressed they were with how we treated the other players, coaches, parents, etc. We were love in the heavily competitive arena and changing the culture became a clear purpose. The entire time this was going on I kept thinking about how important sharing God's word is and wrestled with not doing that regularly.

Through the first two years of coaching club soccer we had also taken on a major home renovation. Major to some is a kitchen renovation. Major to me is doubling the size of our house, adding four bedrooms a full bathroom and great room, adding a detached garage, and adding a basement to our current house. Yes, we were prompted to go down this path too, and as this home project had many hurdles along the way, and they are all important in shaping myself and family. Yet, those will take another story to explain. The part of the project that is important for this purpose is how long it has taken and that it was undone after these first two years. See, during the second year of this gargantuan project is when God put me in contact with those involved with FCA club sports, and especially FCA soccer. He began to nudge through various friends, brothers-in-Christ, and even dreams. One awesome brother

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started the ball rolling. That seed planted when I first had my attention drawn to FCA Tiger soccer in Adrian had taken root and it was apparent that I would be following the leading. Convinced I would make that choice I felt it was prudent to tell Drew that I needed to wait one more year to jump on board. I just had to get the addition done before I committed to making the change. It was around Christmas time when I said that to him. Feb 5<sup>th</sup>. I sat up in bed to get ready, and as though God was in the room with me I knew "it's time to move forward with FCA." I froze, chuckled to myself, and proceeded to tell my wife it was time to jump on board. I messaged Drew what happened, and he replied that after his last training session the previous night he felt he was supposed to reach out to me. I told him "I guess that we both know what that means."

I immediately let the club I was with know what was going on, finished coaching the spring season, and was sick to my stomach leading into our first tryouts. I didn't know if we would even have a single team. Contrary to the rumor mill I was diligent in avoiding recruiting, or hurling my own rumors or gossip. It was important to me that our foundation was built on faith, and not the wreckage of any other club. I let God do the leading, and I am so glad I did. Our first year has been better than I could have imagined. We have not been without challenges, but the players and parents we have are top notch. Our level of play has continued to grow, something highly important to me, and the spiritual temperature continues to get warmer. Before making the jump, my wife asked me why we couldn't just stay at the club we were at. She said, "all these players know how much you love them." My response is all I had been able to think about for months. "If I died today what would they all say?" Perhaps they would say I was a good guy, a good coach, or something of that nature. It cannot be about me, but it must be about Jesus. There is so much more to life than just soccer technique, and we would be missing an opportunity to truly impact their lives if we only shared that part of our life with them. Jesus has taken the mistakes of my life and put me in a place I don't deserve. They need to know that He loves them just the same. That is why I'm with FCA.