

# Meet the Irishman who is Guardian to L.A. Galaxy

Tuesday 16th May 2017

● **SOCCKER**By **Alan Sherry**

Share3

Irishman Michael Quigley with his Galaxy South Bay team

**A football-mad Dubliner is helping to shape the future of the game in the U.S. as the sport continues to grow in popularity.**

Michael Quigley, who is originally from Drimnagh in Dublin, is a leading coach and director of the youth academy of L.A. South Bay.

He has worked alongside David Beckham, Robbie Keane and Steven Gerrard as the Californian club try to change the way football is taught to kids.

He grew up in Drimnagh, but his family spent four years in L.A. when he was younger. As soon as he was old enough he went back and eventually got a green card.



Having first got involved in coaching kids at St John Bosco in Drimnagh, he continued helping out when he joined a team in L.A.

“The more I did it the more I enjoyed it. I was doing it part-time for two or three years, going through the badges as much as I could in my spare time,” he says.

Soon he was headhunted by the David Beckham Academy, who had secretly scouted him doing coaching sessions.

“I was working with coaches who were very knowledgeable and had worked with academies in England. The academy was based where the Galaxy play and being around that environment was great.”

Along with getting his A Licence in coaching, he also got to work with Beckham himself.

“He didn’t want to be just standing on the sideline watching and shaking hands. He really enjoyed getting involved and playing with the kids. It was interesting to see someone who was a superstar out messing with the kids and tugging on their jerseys if they ran past him.”



The academy eventually closed and Michael joined LA South Bay, where he became the director of the youth set-up.

They took a different approach to the youth set-up at other clubs by using A Licence qualified coaches from the age of five up.

Things were going so well that LA Galaxy took notice and formed a partnership with LA South Bay for their youth set-up.

Soon Michael found himself getting to know stars like Robbie Keane and Steven Gerrard.

“When Keano signed it was massive and then Gerrard signed. As a Liverpool fan I couldn’t have had it any better – the Irish captain and Liverpool captain,” says Michael.

“Because they are in America they are a lot more comfortable with chatting with people. In the U.K. I’m sure Gerrard had trouble going out of his house, but here he may not be recognised. So if they see someone from Ireland or the U.K. they’re very comfortable.

“Robbie was always very good. I’d see him in the hall and he’d come and have a chat. When they won the MLS Cup two years ago I was in the locker room having a chat.



He was talking about how different it was here, but he came to win. He didn't just come to finish off his career.  
"galaxy is a unique club because they always want a big name and you never know who you'll see in the hallway."

He says the players would also get involved with the youth academy.

“Keano was great. We had different things we could bring kids into. One was Keano and Gerrard on a full-size pitch against 20 kids. That’s a great experience for the kids. Having that access is fantastic.”

Michael says football is continually growing in popularity in the U.S.

“What has changed most since I’ve been here is how much people are into the game. I came out 15 or 16 years ago and you wouldn’t see a kid in a Man United or Barcelona shirt.

“Now you walk down the road and kids in the schools are wearing football jerseys. They know what Champions League games are on and who is top of the Premier League. That has been an amazing transformation.



“The game is still behind, but it has made up a lot of ground. Kids are playing a lot younger now. There certainly is a soccer culture here now.”

Michael says LA Galaxy are taking a holistic approach to the academy. They have a blended learning environment, which means kids go to the stadium to train, but also for school, where specialist teachers have been employed by the club.

The approach is working. Six academy players, who came through the new system played in the last game for the reserve team. Michael says that if even three of them play for the first team it will be a great result.

He adds that there are kids of Irish descent playing for the club and he'll encourage them to follow in Keane's footsteps and choose to play for Ireland.

"I'd absolutely encourage them to play for Ireland. There are a few kids that are of Irish descent. One of them plays for me at the minute and his mom is from Dublin