

# Camp pro Zenkel brings unique experience to soccer academy

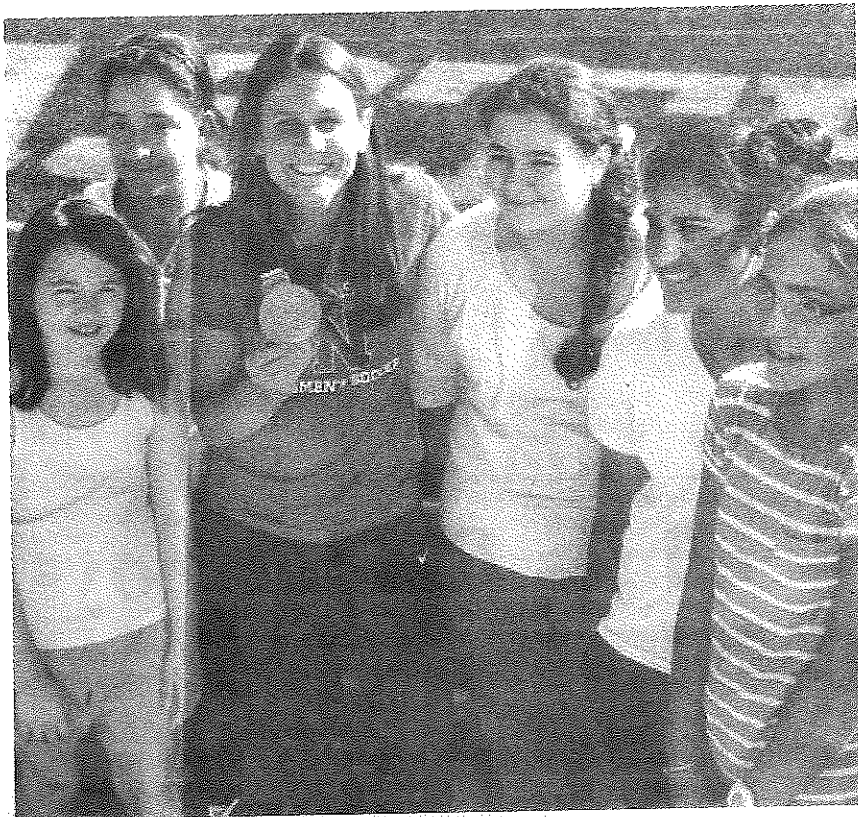
Dan Zenkel, Scarsdale High School '76, founded the Berkshire Soccer Academy for Girls, a unique specialty soccer camp located in Otis, Mass. Unlike all other specialty soccer camps, the academy, which is open to girls ages 9-17, operates in a traditional camp setting and encourages athletes to train hard on the field and to then enjoy relaxing activities like swimming in the camp's private lake, yoga, hiking and arts and crafts. Athletes live in newly renovated cabins that they share with cabin counselors, who are specifically selected and trained to supervise and promote friendships among athletes.

Prior to starting the Berkshire Soccer Academy, Zenkel founded and ran CampGroup, LLC, one of the country's largest owners of for-profit summer camps, including Camps Wisconsin, Winaukee, Ramaquois, Walt Whitman, Cobbossee and Kippewa. From CampGroup's inception in 1998 through February 2009, he guided and oversaw the acquisition, integration and startup of 11 traditional overnight camps and two-day camps.

After leaving CampGroup in 2009, Zenkel set out to bring the magic and joy of traditional overnight camps — where campers typically stay for four or seven weeks — to the specialty camp arena.

Compared to his experiences with traditional summer camps, Zenkel was disappointed by the overnight soccer camps that he encountered when his daughter, a competitive travel soccer player, expressed an interest in attending a residential soccer camp. Zenkel found that such camps operated at rented colleges or boarding schools, were organized by coaches with little or no summer camp experience, did not offer the level of supervision to which he was accustomed and did little to promote positive social interaction among campers and staff. These camps provided excellent training and soccer facilities, but imparted few, if any, of values and life lessons of traditional camps, such as confidence, responsibility, healthy risk-taking and friendship.

Zenkel recognized a need for a girls' soccer camp that would provide excellent facilities, top level instruction and a fun and values-oriented environment. As a camping professional, he felt capable of filling that need and set out to do so. In late 2009, Zenkel purchased a beautiful, 116-acre summer



Olympian Heather O'Reilly will work with Dan Zenkel's Berkshire Soccer Academy for Girls this summer.

camp property in the Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts, complete with cabins, a lakeside dining hall and plenty of space to clear for sports fields.

After two years of renovations and additions, the academy opened for its first full season in 2012 and expects to welcome 300 campers over four sessions this coming summer. The academy has gained widespread recognition in the soccer community for its innovative approach.

Recently, one of the top players in the world, U.S. Women's National Team midfielder and three-time Olympic gold medalist Heather O'Reilly, announced her affiliation with the academy. She will be a guest coach this coming summer.

"I am really excited to be joining the academy's team," O'Reilly said. "The academy's unique approach, which offers great instruction by professional coaches and a fun variety of other activities, seems to me to create an important balance for the 9-15-year-olds that the academy primarily serves. I look forward to spending time there and contributing to the program both on and off the pitch."

Camp directors Eric and Liza Wit-

tenberg confirmed the announcement with a statement: "We are delighted that Heather O'Reilly, one of the top female players in the world, will be visiting and enriching our program. The Berkshire Soccer Academy for Girls is a unique overnight soccer camp which infuses balance and fun into a world-class soccer camp experience. We strive to provide a fun experience where every girl elevates her game. We feel that Heather's decision to affiliate with us and to join us at camp validates our approach."

Liza Wittenberg, who will oversee the academy's soccer training, added, "Heather has a degree in education and runs her own soccer clinics. We are confident that her involvement will enhance the quality of the instruction we offer."

The academy's four 2013 sessions are set for June 28-July 2, July 7-18, July 20-25 and July 28-Aug. 2. The date for O'Reilly's appearance has not been set as it depends on her summer schedule as a member of the Boston Breakers in the new National Women's Soccer League (NWSL).

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