BOYS SOCCER

US coach enjoys family time

Klinsmann’s son was keeper in game against a Breakers Academy team at Cabrillo College

By Isaiah Guzman

Juergen Klinsmann, coach of the U.S. men’s national soccer team, was at Cabrillo College on Sunday watching his son Jonathan’s Irvine Strikers FC play the Santa Cruz Breakers in an under-18 academy game.

Seated a few rows up, with no secret service, no entourage, nothing other than sunglasses, jeans and a navy blue polo, the one-time German soccer star leaned back in the sun and chatted it up with parents. It seemed most people didn’t even recognize him or his wife, former model and San Jose native Debbie Chin.

“It’s very different here,” he said of living in the U.S. compared with Europe. “And it’s good for us as a family. We can have a normal life.”

Klinsmann talked of how academy teams such as the Breakers and Strikers FC are improving the

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feeder system for American soccer. Many colleges now use the academy as their scouting ground, and domestic and international clubs are also taking notice.

“I think it’s going the right direction,” Klinsmann said, “But it still needs a lot of work to get there.”

Jonathan, who has played for the U.S. U-18 national team, used the academy for exposure before signing with Cal earlier this month.

The goalkeeper made news in May when he sent out a Tweet laughing at Landon Donovan after the popular American star had been left off the World Cup roster.

The elder Klinsmann said publicly that his son owed Donovan a huge apology. Jonathan owned it, deleted the Tweet and the whole thing eventually died down.

Klinsmann said he was not officially looking for talent this weekend, though some of his scouts talked with players after matches in San Jose on Saturday.

Several of the Breakers players talked to Klinsmann after the game.

“I told kids there, ‘You always see him on TV, and he’s live in front of you,’” Klinsmann said. “That was cool for those kids,” said Paolo Carbone, the Breakers Technical Director, who was overseeing the match. “But the kids were respectful as well because he came with his wife to have family time.”

Carbone said about 150 fans, including Klinsmann, were in the stands for Sunday’s game. The Strikers FC came from behind with two late goals to beat the Breakers 3-2.

Jonathan had a late save to preserve the victory.

“I’m just trying to enjoy the last few games for our son while he does academy,” Klinsmann said. When asked if Santa Cruz County was on his radar, Klinsmann said that there are scouts everywhere and that talent won’t get missed.

In addition to a growing academy that features the areas best players, the county consistently has high school teams in the section playoffs. Most notable is Watsonville High, which was ranked No. 3 in the nation by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America last month.

“If there would be a kid in school, two or three special kids, we would know it,” Klinsmann said.

Julie Jag contributed to this report.

AT A GLANCE

JURGEN KLINSMANN

Born: July 30, 1964, in Göppingen, Germany

First professional contract: at 16, with the Stuttgart Kickers

Studied: baking

Family: Wife Debbie Chin, a former supermodel, and children Jonathan and Laila

Olympic medals: 1 (bronze, 1988)

World Cups: 3 as player (1st, 1990; 1994; 1998); 2 as coach (2006; 2014)

Honors: German Footballer of the Year (1988, 1994); English Footballer of the Year (1995); First to score at least three goals in three different World Cups