



**The St. James and Villarreal Virginia Academy Player Development Partnership**  
***Focus on Enhancing Youth Player Development for Grassroots, Futsal, Boys & Girls Academy***  
***and Travel Programs***

**Springfield, VA (June 21, 2021)** -- The St. James and Villarreal Virginia Academy announced today a new strategic partnership highlighting a shared approach to increasing player development opportunities for emerging young players in both organizations.

Through a shared and holistic approach to helping each young player reach and maximize their potential, The St. James and Villarreal Virginia Academy technical staff will collaborate in talent identification, individual player development and evaluation, expanded coaching education opportunities – all with the goal of increasing player access to year-round training and competition facilities and programming for players of all ages, abilities and interests.

“I’m looking forward to working with Christian, Doug and all members of both clubs’ staff,” commented Bo Amato, Executive Director of VIVA. “It’s really positive for us to have a strategic partnership with an organization that shares our mission and vision for youth. By coming together, all of our families will have a better youth football experience that supports hands-on learning, competitive opportunities and advancement into all levels of the game. This will certainly help the membership of both clubs and I am very pleased that we have taken this positive step.”

Founded in 2017, Villarreal Virginia Academy (“VIVA”) brings elite players and top-tier coaches together with the goal of helping each player improve, develop confidence and build character on and off the playing field. The Villarreal CF training methodology and professional coaching staff provide a developmental pathway based on Best Practices for youth players, beginning with recreational opportunities and expanding into competitive soccer at the U9 through U19 age groups. By working together, both partners will enhance educational and player pathway opportunities to the professional game with male and female players selected to train and tryout with Villarreal CF’s Academy teams in Spain.

“The collaboration between The St. James and VIVA will provide an ideal performance environment for both clubs to continue their pursuit of excellence in player development,” said Karen Billingslea, VIVA’s Girls’ Director of Coaching. “We feel very strongly about the importance of combining forces and methodologies – all of which will add to a long-term approach to helping each child achieve their goals.”

The St. James and VIVA boast a technical staff with vast professional, college and club experience - all of which supports individual player development, team formation and pathways to college, professional and National Team opportunities.

“By joining together with VIVA, we gain a like-minded partner that values positivity and inspirational player development,” said Christian Cziommer, Technical Director for Elite Player Development.

“Children and families in both organizations will now have more opportunities to learn, compete and receive support in their pursuit of soccer excellence. Our collaborative approach will provide guidance and opportunities for players to accomplish their goals.”

“This relationship brings a fantastic opportunity to create a better environment for both clubs,” said Carlos Aranda, VIVA’s Technical Director. “We believe that this will support each player in their pursuit of excellence and open new competitive opportunities.”

While The St. James has had a high number of professional and National Team player placements, the opportunity for both partners to expand this tradition and forge new pathways for its membership to access elite youth, collegiate and professional tiers is a shared mission and vision of the partnership. The collective goal is to increase the number of players eligible for and selected for college, professional and National Team placement as well as prepare student-athletes for success with valuable life and leadership skills.

“Our mission and vision for player development and coaching education are congruent in a number of ways,” said Douglas Homer, TSJ’s Director of Soccer. “This partnership with VIVA is genuine in purpose and intent – collaborating with Bo, Carlos and members of the VIVA technical staff helps all players and families in both clubs find a pathway forward in the sport. Together, we look forward to working together to curate meaningful programming that supports each player in his or her pursuit of excellence, on and off the field.”

Further details pertaining to the partnership are available [HERE](#).

*To learn more about Villarreal Virginia Academy, visit [www.villarrealva.org](http://www.villarrealva.org).*

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