

After successful start, SF Deltas coach Marc Dos Santos looks forward to the challenge ahead

By Douglas Zimmerman on July 28, 2017 at 2:11 PM



San Francisco Deltas head coach Marc Dos Santos before the NASL soccer match between Puerto Rico FC and the San Francisco Deltas at Kezar Stadium in Golden Gate Park. (Robert Edwards-KLC fotos)

San Francisco was the surprise side of the NASL Spring Season finishing in second place. "I think it's extraordinary. With a small squad, a limited budget, a short amount of time, Marc and his core five have been able to create a winning team," said Deltas CEO Brian Helmick.

"When I talk to these players they let me know that this is really special," Helmick added.

Although the team's positive work has put the Deltas in a good position in their stated goal of qualifying for the NASL postseason, head coach Marc Dos Santos isn't taking the challenge ahead lightly.

"There are a lot of teams that will be fighting for those [playoff] spots," Dos Santos said. He noted that Indy Eleven was winless through their first eleven games but won four of their last five. The New York Cosmos have improved their roster, Miami is the class of the league, and North Carolina is always a dangerous opponent.

The Deltas coach was proud of his team's steady performances in the first half of the season, especially on the defensive end, and its record on the road. He also said the team achieved its goals for the Spring Season which included finishing in a playoff position and playing an MLS team in the US Open Cup (they played the San Jose Earthquakes away losing 2-0).

For the fall season, he wants to continue solidifying the team's defense while making the offensive attack more dynamic and less predictable. "I think there is still a lot of margin for progression," said Dos Santos. "If you build a team you build it like a house. It goes in phases. I think we are going to enter stage two of the build up of our team now."

"People want a team that gets results and that win," he continued. "Most of the time we've done that this year. We want to keep doing that but at the same time improve in the way that we play. Score more goals, be more offensive, yes. But that doesn't mean by being more offensive we lose our integrity and organization defensively."

Having learned about the quality and skills of his players in the Spring Season give his staff the chance to adapt how they will be utilized in the fall season.

"We're finding out we have some flexibility when it comes to the way in which we play," he added, particularly on the offensive side.

The coach offered the example of Maxim Tissot. He was brought in as a left back but has shown good qualities as a wing back. "It's little details on some of the players that allow us to have more flexibility in our system of play," he noted.

Although Dos Santos employed multiple formations during the first half of the season, he is planning to have his team play mostly a 3-5-2 or a 4-3-3 formation in the Fall Season.

"These are two systems that I want our players to be more comfortable with," he said. "If we have to change in the game one to the other, I want them to feel the tactical ability to be comfortable to change in the game. If the opponent has to bring us to do something like that and we have to be ready for it."

The Deltas were able to field a fairly consistent starting lineup for the first half, and Dos Santos learned that he can rely on any bench player to step in and perform.

He noted that every player's role is important because the team has a small roster of 23 players. "We don't have a youth team," said Dos Santos. "It's important for us to keep everybody fresh, everybody ready, and everybody involved, so the roster is always ready to go when we need them."



Deltas head coach Marc Dos Santos talks with former assistant coach Andrea Di Pietrantonio in the Spring Season. (Photo: SF Deltas)

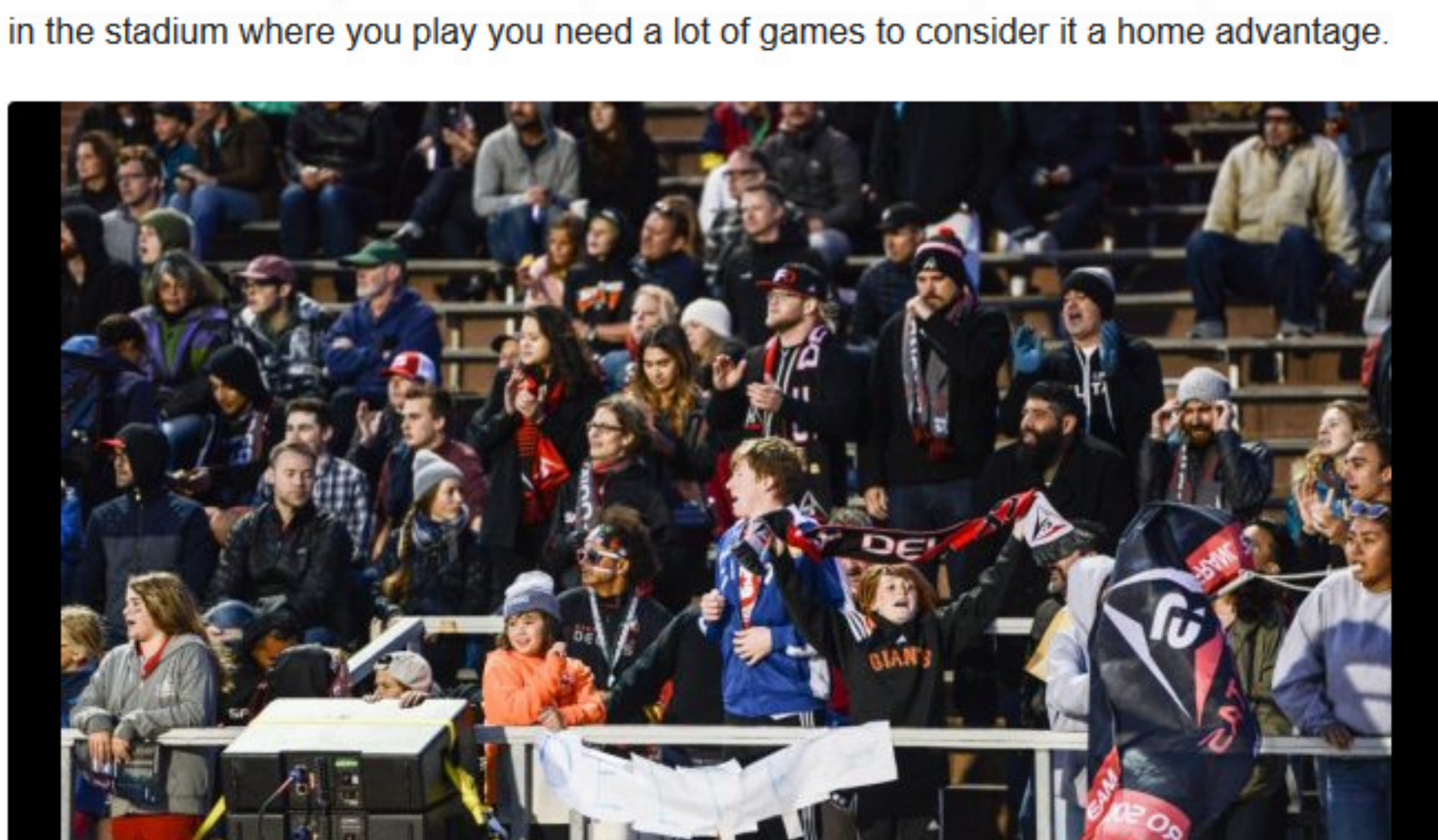
The Deltas have one significant addition for the Fall Season with Brazilian league veteran Dagoberto joining the team. Dos Santos plans to bring him along slowly starting with him coming off the bench. "He's doing well," he said. "It's his first time playing outside Brazil, so it's all new for him. He's also getting adapted to the training mythology. He's going to need a little bit of time like every foreign player needs time."

The expansion side Deltas have overcome some significant hurdles on the training field to be successful. The team does not have its own practice facility. Its preferred training ground, Boxer stadium, was unavailable for over five weeks as the grass was reseeded. It forced the team to train on the public soccer fields at Beach Chalet in Golden Gate Park.

"It's very difficult. We are able to do it, and our guys have kept a great mentality. We've had one hundred training sessions since day one. I could count on my hand the times they did bad in a session," noted Dos Santos. "Our guys are grinders. Our guys work very hard. Our guys have an incredible give mentality. I'm proud to coach these guys."

Dos Santos also wishes the team would have been able to play more games at Kezar Stadium and establish a home advantage. The team has only been able to play at the stadium on game days.

"There was a moment that we played Indy in our second game against them at Kezar. Indy had played twice at Kezar, and we had played five times," Dos Santos said. "To say that Kezar was our home, it was also Indy's home. What I mean by that is when you don't train in the stadium where you play you need a lot of games to consider it a home advantage."



Deltas fans cheer on the team at Kezar Stadium on June 3rd against the Indy Eleven. (Courtesy Timothy McLaughlin)

"We hope it will be a home advantage in the Fall Season," he continued. "It's a great stadium. It's a great grass field, and we love playing there. But it takes a little more time until we can consider it a home advantage."

The coach has appreciated the atmosphere the fans have created at Kezar Stadium, especially during the home opener and the match against the New York Cosmos. "The Delta Force, the organized supporters group, has done an incredible job supporting us," he said. But he notes that the team needs more fans to come and support the team. "I'd love for more fans to come to the game. We need the fans to survive, that's the reality. It's not only the Deltas. Any professional franchise is nothing without the fans," he commented.

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As the head coach, Dos Santos says he will keep focused on what he can control. "My role in the club is to make sure I prepare the players to see a group of guys that give their very best every game."

The Deltas start the Fall Season on the road playing against the Jacksonville Armada Sunday at 3 pm PDT. Their first home game is Saturday, August 5th against the New York Cosmos at 5 pm PDT.