



AJ Cochran – U18 US Men’s National Team



Alec (AJ) Cochran, was recently selected to play for the U18 US Soccer team in 4 games in Argentina and Chile.

AJ plays club soccer for the St. Louis Scott Gallagher's US Development Academy Team. In May, AJ was selected to play in a USSDA all-star game in Sarasota,

FL, bringing together the top 16 players in the country from all USDA teams.

Below are AJ's thoughts from his experiences in Argentina and Chile with the U18 National Team.

What position did you play with the 'National Team' and what were your responsibilities within the team's formation?

With the National Team I played in the center of the defense. My responsibilities were to keep the defense organized, win everything in the air, challenge for every tackle, play good 1v1 defending, and to make sure our spacing with the midfielders and attackers was always good.

Could you compare the Argentina soccer environment to the environment that American players are developed? Is there a higher level of seriousness and commitment from the players that you noticed?

The Argentina soccer environment was like none I have ever seen before. Every patch of grass, piece of concrete, or field of dirt had a soccer goal on it. Their lifestyle is soccer. If they don't make it in soccer then most of them won't make it



in anything. There were fields everywhere you looked and players on every single one of them. The best way I can describe it is by, soccer is a religion to them. Yes, there is definitely a higher level of seriousness and commitment from the players that I noticed. In America there are so many sports for children to try and play. In Argentina it's all about soccer.

To view the interview in its entirety click on the Coaching Resources link on the ASET front page. Then click on the articles and interviews link. The title of the interview is 'Interview with AJ Cochran'.

Other questions asked during the interview include the following:

The mental side of soccer is very important if a player is going to give their self the best opportunity to succeed. How did you prepare yourself mentally to play at the international level and did the coaches offer any advice regarding the psychological component?

Did the formation of the team change according to the opponent or did the team maintain the same formation through all games?

Do you feel that playing for SLSG in the U.S. Development Academy program has helped you prepare to compete at the international level?

What advice could you offer to younger players that have the thought of playing at the highest youth level and representing their country in international competition?