

**Oakland NJ Town Leadership;  
Bobby Calderon;**

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**May 20, 2019**

**Subject: Bobby Calderon and community involvement**

Bobby Calderon, a former professional soccer player emigrated from Costa Rica to the USA in 1978 to Miami, Fla. In 1980 He moved to NJ with his wife Esmeralda. He and his wife possessed the work ethic to start very productive lives in the USA. Bobby's life has shown us all what is meant by being an exemplary individual, family person, husband, father, citizen, role model, friend and productive individual, for his entire community, and all those involved with him and his work.

Bobby became one of the early 'pioneers', building and growing American Soccer locally for the community, at a time when there were only a few youth teams operating. Bobby was key in growing youth soccer in our community, working with RYSA and others here to start and train teams at a time where there were only a few. Bobby has been involved with RYSA, Oakland and other towns, with thousands of players over a 39 year timeline.

His superb (professional play) ability coupled with his highly instructive/instinctive approach created bonds with beginners, and with their families, achievement, and enjoyment for all involved. He was instrumental in Oakland, Franklin Lakes and other surrounding towns in growing soccer clubs, and in particular the Ramapo Youth Soccer Association (RYSA/"Ramapo Wildcats") that served thousands of local town players over 39 years of his direct involvement as the key trainer and coach. Bobby is loved and respected by his players as a result of his unique and personal approach.

Over the years, Oakland Community has produced many great youth athletes playing soccer, and also has achieved numerous State Championship Club and High School teams. A look at the players and results confirms that our best teams always have the majority of players that are or were trained by Bobby Calderon and his training staff and possess the unique and recognizable style of a "Bobby-trained" team. The kids of every age between 3 and 20 years old (and older) and players as they mature and become adults all benefit from Bobby's kind style and his devotion to their success and to the sport. Bobby has worked with the schools, leadership, parents, coaches, Club e.g., RYSA leadership to build the best environment and unique recognizable skills for all of the players.

Bobby worked to grow the player inclusive policy to build both "A" and "B" teams in the Ramapo Wildcats giving access to soccer to many more children. This policy produced many teams in each age group and in time one could not differentiate between "A" team or "B" team players. This resulted in High Schools having so many great players that State Championships were achieved. Bobby can always be seen observing training, coaching, running camps and clinics (spring, summer, Winter/indoors, Fall), on fields and indoors and at tournaments with the teams in action that he is involved with.

In 1985, Bobby introduced the concept of the "Bobby Soccer Camp", to better teach and give special attention to willing players. This later became Bobby's "First Shot Soccer Camp" and also approximately in 1999/2000 he introduced with the President of RYSA and others, the "RYSA Junior Wildcats", working through present day for many kids from age 3 and higher, through high school.

On the “lighter side” way back in that era, he jokingly stated to several players “no-es-skill” (meaning no skill), at a practice once. It was meant as a joke and softened his critique by using his unique communication technique to make it funny. This expression became and is still to the present day, the icon/phrase that kids lovingly think about as they work hard to attain the unique skills and style that he teaches all teams he trains. When they make a mistake they sometimes laugh and say to Bobby “no-es-skill”, and then try harder on their own! It is the chant for excellence!

The truth (by example) is that RYSA teams that use Bobby develop a very unique and recognizable style and skill of play that the competition and their coaches know comes from Bobby’s training. One team went to a major National Tournament in California (and won), as the officials and some coaches recognized the unique style of play that Bobby taught them over the years. Another U16 Girls team went to Virginia and the referees were commenting on the unique set of skills and synched play and self-discipline the RYSA girls had (they won the flight too). Players get a chance to grow unique abilities while having fun, and to gain skills, in a positive and also competitive way, making lifetime friends over their years of involvement. He listens and interacts with players so well and they enjoy his support.

I have known Bobby Calderon since 1993 when my daughter joined a new RYSA (Ramapo Wildcats) soccer team. I coached and later became President of RYSA. Bobby was and is an integral part of the spirit of the RYSA and its value to the community. I can state from experience in this that the vast majority of players Bobby trains also strive to be successful throughout their school years, college and on to their working and professional futures and lives. They often tell us that their experiences with Bobby Calderon in soccer were a big part of learning to work hard for their goals (learning how to be successful, useful in all aspects of our lives).

Bobby trained many teams in the RYSA Wildcats. Bobby served as trainer for our team and others until the players were U19 (High School Seniors). The players such as my team and others maintain contact with each other and with Bobby, to this day both through social media and also in person. The memories are valuable.

I got to know Bobby well, as Bobby planned our year round training at a time where we grew the Club to nearly 40 teams, representing over 500 local families. I am here to tell you that the results Bobby achieved for the RYSA and for the entire community far exceed the areas of soccer and sports, but really are applicable to all of the successes and values that our communities want for our children and for our towns, and for our lives.

**Let’s see some of the relevant success areas:**

- **Love for the game/** love for sports and activities- Bobby’s actions observed by all project love of the sport. His involvement gives the kids and families lifetime memories at games and also away tournaments.
- **Teamwork-** Teams that stay together and play well do so and this is grown through Bobby’s involvement, coaching and training.
- **Skills, techniques, fitness and abilities** teaching- Simply put professional trainers come to observe Bobby at work as his teams are always among the most skilled in the peer group.
- **Hard work-** Bobby exemplifies consistency, work, patience and longevity in the sport to all
- **Community Service,** as Bobby can be observed often cleaning fields, keeping up the facilities, working to ready facilities and often does this after others have left

- **Teaching by example**, not 'controlling', or yelling and never 'cross' with kids. All of the players try to copy Bobby. His calm and kind style is loved and respected by the players
- **Respect for teammates**, for coaches, for parents, for referees, trainers, and for all others- Bobby does this and sets an example for all involved.
- **Bobby's respect for the Town** and Fields, and facilities, equipment, and rules is demonstrated each day out there and observed by all of the players and parents.
- **Healthy outdoor active lifestyle**- So many players grow up to continue to be active. Many stay in sports, some coach, some play in college, a few get beyond even that. It is for a lifetime!
- **Ability to compete fairly, and respectfully, and give ones best**- Winning is important, however going about the pursuit right is key. Winning and losing with dignity. Coming back another day!
- **Helping children** and all involved, throughout their youth and life through hard times in some examples (below)
  - **Sometimes players have had personal problems during or after their soccer years**, substance abuse, college, work, anorexia. Bobby has supported kids whether or not they were or are active players in all ways that he could (examples without names can be discussed)
- **Results- as a Team, Club, Town, Individual, in the High Schools, and more. (examples below)**
  - Winning (teams trained by Bobby) have achieved a very high level of play over the years
  - RYSA Teams trained by Bobby over the years, were/ are among the most skillful/players in the State. Teams specifically taught/trained by Bobby have a unique winning style.
  - Striving- Teaching that hard work and giving it your best becomes instinctive in the kids
  - Bobby's players achieve in other areas, including work, college, etc.
- **Great lifetime impact, many players**- Impacting thousands of players over his decade's long experience.
- **Keeping training inexpensive**- by always going the extra mile to do so. (Training can be expensive)
- **Something for all players**-Knowing what 3 year olds need and equally what high school and older age players need and how to reach/communicate with them/ ability to provide very effective support and teaching for all levels and ages.
  - Fun is also important whether you are on the field or off. Bobby played (as example) Santa Clause for players, and supported others in different ways over the years
- **Being the best we can be**-RYSA teams trained by Bobby were usually among the most achieved teams in NJ/State.
- **Indian Hills achieved State Champion status in multiple years**, when the majority of players were trained over their soccer lives by Bobby Calderon in both A and B teams giving the schools many great players with RYSA Coaches that followed the unique training and coaching style that Bobby taught.

**Summarizing Bobby Calderon's lifetime work** and his value to the Community in Oakland is easy. He has given so much to all who choose to be involved with him. But one of the best examples that can be seen, is in his own family. Bobby and his wife Esmeralda have lived, raised a wonderful family, worked and achieved so much for Oakland and many people since emigrating from Costa Rica many years ago. Their children (Michael, Daisy and Cindy) all former and even current players are exemplary mature adults and they are also wonderful people, embarked on their formal working

careers and building families as well. Michael has coached at Indian Hills. Daisy has coached at Indian Hills as well. Cindy has played on the Costa Rican Women's National and continues to play semipro today. All are/were RYSA trainers. The example to all is a life well lived that is continuing still in his kids and their children as Bobby and Esmeralda have 4 grandchildren now.

Bobby maintains contacts with international players, the leagues in Costa Rica and continues to be well respected by the International, and USA soccer communities so many years after he left his professional career as a player. I cannot think of a more deserving member of our community to be recognized by all.

**Sincerely,**

**Richard Luciano**