



2016 Men's Soccer Recruiting Class



VALPO 2016 RECRUITING CLASS

COACH MIKE AVERY ON THIS YEAR'S RECRUITING CLASS:

"2016 has been an interesting year in recruiting for the staff, and I am happy to report that they have done the same tremendous job that we've all come to expect. We have a large group of returning players - including rising senior Kevin Fallet who won an appeal for his final season from the NCAA earlier in the spring - so we had a very specific set of expectations for what we needed out of this recruiting class. We have 23 players back from last year's squad, including 13 that will be seniors in 2016, so while it is a deep squad in the fall, the turnover will come quickly. We needed to create depth for the future, which we've done, while adding to the present, which we have also done. We will likely add one or two more players later this month, but it is clear to see already that we've fulfilled our expectations."

"We have a handful of players in this group that can and likely will contribute right away. Kendan Anderson is one example of that type of impact player. Kendan is a very talented striker that brings significant Jamaican youth national team experience, a first-team junior college All-American award, and high level Division 1 experience from University of South Florida with him to Valparaiso. We needed to also add significant pieces to the team that provide us with depth in the short term and will serve as the core for future teams. This class does indeed do both."

"We are very excited to now welcome this group of student-athletes officially to the Valparaiso family. Most have been signed since February, but we have been finalizing the details on a few and wanted to wait to do an official release until we had the full class set. What you see in this class is that it represents a recruiting philosophy that has been successful for us, and fits both our team and our university. We've intentionally mined talent out of places like California and Texas - which are fertile regions that have been good to us in the past - as well as the Midwest - which remains our bread and butter at Valpo. We've also continued to solidify our international presence on the roster by specifically adding to our large Caribbean contingent with a player from Jamaica and another from the Cayman Islands, both with youth national team experience. When you look at this group as a whole, it looks like a Valpo team. This is a group that will blend in well with our current team and we are anxious to get them here on campus and get to work. Is it August yet?"



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KENDAN ANDERSON

Hometown: Portmore, Jamaica

Position: Forward

Height: 5'8"

Weight: 150 lbs.

Previous Schools: St. George's College/ASA College (N.Y.)/
University of South Florida

Club Team: Cavalier FC

COACH MIKE AVERY ON KENDAN:

"Kendan is a talented attacking player who can stretch defenses with his pace and can score goals. He was a high school teammate of Nico Campbell and Adrian Graham, where the three together won the Manning Cup with St. George's College. I saw Kendan play live for the first time a few years ago with the Jamaican u20 national team, the same time I first saw Nico Campbell play. They were both with the group that played in CONCACAF World Cup qualifying in Puebla, Mexico, and while we were not able to get Kendan to Valpo at that time, I am thrilled to have him on board now. Kendan was a first team NJCAA All-American at ASA College in New York, and then gained great experience at a top-25 USF program. I think Kendan has the potential to be one of the top attackers in the Horizon League next year. He will form a great striking partnership with Matthew Gweh as I think the two can really complement one another. That dynamic duo of Gweh and Anderson will also have great support from a talented midfield pool of players like Isaiah Madrid, Ramone Howell, Okama Thomspon, Nelson Landaverde and Suleiman Thomas. Kendan has one year left in college and we plan to help him earn his degree and prepare for an opportunity in the professional game. He certainly has the type of talent to make it at the next level."



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HAMID BABAALI

Hometown: Los Angeles, Calif.

Position: Forward

Height: 5'8"

Weight: 165 lbs.

Previous School: Le Lycee Francais de Los Angeles

Club Team: FC Los Angeles

COACH MIKE AVERY ON HAMID:

"Hamid came on our radar late when he was recommended to me by a former teammate of mine from Los Angeles. As I watched him play and reviewed his background, his soccer experience and his academics, I was quite frankly shocked he was still on the market. Hamid is the whole package. This is a talented, two footed, attacking player that has a nose for the goal and a very determined fighting spirit on the field. He has an array of soccer experiences and influences to call on, which is perhaps the most compelling reason why he was available so late – while most players his age were playing in showcase events in the US with their club teams, Hamid was training with clubs in Brazil or Europe. In addition, Hamid had a good run with the Sueno MLS competition, earning high praise from the LA Galaxy coaching staff. Hamid's soccer pedigree reflects in how he plays, and he will be a great option for us as an attacking player either up front or in the higher parts of midfield. Off the field, Hamid is just as accomplished. He is a tremendous student at a very well respected school in Los Angeles, and is a very, humble, polite and intelligent young man. The fact that he speaks five different languages bodes well for him fitting into our melting pot of a locker room, and I am very excited to watch Hamid's career unfold at Valpo."



2016 Men's Soccer Recruiting Class



BLAKE COMSTOCK

Hometown: Marion, Iowa

Position: Midfielder/Forward

Height: 5'10"

Weight: 150 lbs.

Previous School: Linn-Mar H.S.

Club Team: Cedar River Soccer Association

COACH MIKE AVERY ON BLAKE:

"Blake is a player we have had an eye on for quite a while. He has been to multiple VIP camps over the years, and each time I see him, I am more convinced that he is a tremendous fit for Valparaiso. Blake comes from the same part of Iowa that produced two Valpo soccer greats in Kyle Zobeck and Charles Barden, so that part of the country has been good to us. In fact, Blake will graduate from the same high school as Charles Barden, and Blake shares many of the same qualities that made Charles such an important player for us. Blake is a gifted player that has great technique, awareness, energy as he goes forward with the ball, and a high soccer IQ. Blake can play as a high striker, an underneath striker, a wide attacker, maybe even as an attacking fullback. His versatility is matched only by his outstanding effort and attitude. Blake has a quiet confidence about him when he plays and a maturity about him that fits well with my coaching style. He steps into a deep pool of senior attacking players in 2016, but I have no doubt that he will find a way to make a positive impact from the start. As he develops during his soccer career at Valparaiso, the level of impact will grow accordingly."



2016 Men's Soccer Recruiting Class



MICHAEL CUSHING

Hometown: Orange, Calif.

Position: Midfielder/Forward

Height: 5'8"

Weight: 145 lbs.

Previous School: Villa Park H.S.

Club Team: Irvine Strikers

COACH MIKE AVERY ON MICHAEL:

"I've lived in the Midwest for a while now, but I am still a California boy at heart having been born and raised there, and many of my best friends are still on the West Coast. Michael was recommended to me initially by one of these friends – a former college teammate of mine – and I am thrilled that my friend gave me the tip. I'll owe him for a while now because Michael is another tremendous addition to our group. Michael is a midfield player that plays in a central role and plays the game in a way that I really appreciate. He is clean technically, has tricks up his sleeve but doesn't need to show them all the time to be effective, and helps his team connect and possess. Michael also has a great ability get his head up in possession and play pivotal passes that have range and break pressure. Whenever I've watched him play, he seems to be the hub of all activity, much in the same way that Zev Taublieb (another Southern California native that had a great career at Valpo) did for us and now does at the professional level with his Wilmington Hammerheads (NASL) club. Michael is also the product of a very good Irvine Strikers club so comes to college well prepared. The final selling point for us was that when Michael came to our VIP camp last summer, he lit it up on the field and impressed off of it. He is a good kid and will be a great teammate. Though he's also a California boy, like me, Michael does have family connections to the Chicago area and his sister recently graduated from St. Mary's College in Indiana, so I am sure he will feel right at home here in Valparaiso."



2016 Men's Soccer Recruiting Class



ADAN GARCIA

Hometown: Dallas, Texas

Position: Midfielder

Height: 5'11"

Weight: 145 lbs.

Previous School: Episcopal School of Dallas

Club Team: FC Dallas Premier

COACH MIKE AVERY ON ADAN:

"Texas has long been a hotbed for youth soccer talent, and fortunately for us, my assistant coach, Kelly Altman, is well connected in the soccer circles of Texas. Coach Altman has spent a lot of time in and around the Dallas area during this recruiting cycle, and through that work we have found a real gem in Adan Garcia. Adan is a talented Texan from FC Dallas with a ton of experience and success with his club team FC Dallas 98 Premier coached by Scott Dymond. Adan's team has won it all - from the prestigious Dallas Cup to Texas state championships to Regional titles, and he's competed at the USYSA Club National tournament several summers in a row, so he's not shy on high-level experience. Adan's an all-out competitor and has established himself as a hard working midfielder capable of running past defenders with his lively and dynamic approach to the game. His contributions over his four years at Valpo will be significant. Adan will be a threat out wide or in behind a high striker with this creativity and effervescent nature. We are eager to get Adan on campus this fall."



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ANTON NELSON

Hometown: Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands

Position: Midfielder

Height: 5'11"

Weight: 170 lbs.

Previous School: Shrewsbury School (England)

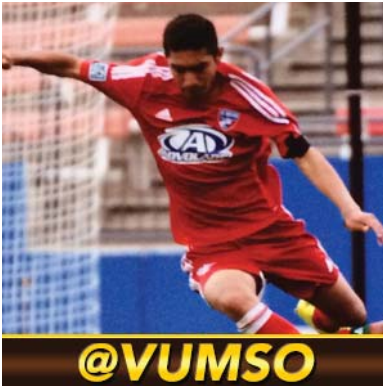
Club Team: Cayman Islands u20 National Team

COACH MIKE AVERY ON ANTON:

“We’ve developed a fairly extensive network of contacts throughout the Caribbean region, and Anton Nelson came to us originally through this network. Anton is another talented attacking player that brings to us a wide range of experiences that will help our program grow. Anton’s father is from England and his mother from the Cayman Islands, and he has grown up with a foot in both places. Anton attends the very prestigious Shrewsbury School in England, a boarding school founded in 1552 and that counts such notable alumni as Charles Darwin among its ‘Old Salopians,’ or former students. In addition to competing for Shrewsbury, Anton has been a regular with the Cayman Island youth national teams. Recently named the captain of the u20 squad, Anton will lead the Caymans in CONCACAF U20 World Cup Qualifying tournament later this month in Haiti. Anton has both pace and guile, and he can play a variety of positions in the attack. I love the way he can quickly get past a first wave of defenders and find himself in dangerous positions to either shoot or play someone else on to goal.”



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CHRIS VILLALOBOS

Hometown: Richardson, Texas

Position: Midfielder

Height: 5'9"

Weight: 155 lbs.

Previous School: JJ Peace H.S.

Club Team: FC Dallas USSDA

COACH MIKE AVERY ON CHRIS:

“Chris Villalobos is another Texas product that we can trace back to Coach Altman, joining us from one of the country’s top US Soccer Development Academy teams in FC Dallas. A native of Dallas, Texas and a graduate of JJ Pearce HS, Chris arrives from the Lone Star State with a very promising future ahead of him. We are excited for Chris’ potential as he has all the tools to be successful here at Valpo. He has a very professional approach to the game, two clean feet, excellent vision and an engine all players covet. He’s a gritty and tenacious midfielder who will likely sit right in front of the back four or is our box-to-box guy in the center of the park. His experience and education with FC Dallas has prepared him to be ready from the start and we think he has the potential to make a contribution – whether that be as a first eleven guy or as a key back up - from day one. Chris makes a difficult game look easy, and we can not wait to get him in camp with our team.”