



# THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON • 2008 MEN'S SOCCER MEDIA GUIDE

## HEAD COACH CALEB PORTER



### CALEB PORTER

**HEAD COACH**  
Third Season  
Indiana, 1998

**C**aleb Porter, the 2007 Mid-American Conference Coach of the Year, has led the Akron soccer program to consecutive league titles and national prominence since becoming its head coach in January of 2006.

During his tenure, the Zips have posted league-best records of 28-9-3 (.738) overall and 8-1-1 (.850) in MAC play. Moreover, since 2005 UA has logged the best winning percentage in the nation, going 45-10-7 (.782) despite playing some of the best programs in the country with an NCAA RPI of 10 in 2007 and 46 in 2006.

For his numerous accomplishments, Porter recently had his contract extended through the 2011 season.

Akron claimed both the regular season and league tournament titles in 2007 and finished as the 23rd-ranked team in the nation in the final National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) poll. The Zips were the 14th seed for the 2007 NCAA Championship, earning a first-round bye, and hosted No. 17 South Florida in the second round.

Under Porter's guidance, the Zips have produced the MAC Player of the Year in each season (Corey Sipos in 2007 and Sinisa Ubiparipovic in 2006) and lead the league with 17 all-conference honorees, including 14 first-teamers. In 2007, Akron swept the league postseason awards by claiming Coach of the Year, Player of the Year and Newcomer of the Year (Steve Zakuani) honors.

National accolades have also come in abundance during Porter's regime as the third-year coach has yielded two All-American honorees and six NSCAA All-Great Lakes Region performers. In addition, Ubiparipovic was a third-round selection of the New York Red Bull in the 2007 MLS SuperDraft, becoming the first Akron player taken in the SuperDraft.

In two full years of recruiting at Akron, Porter and his staff have produced some of the best classes in the nation with a No. 5 ranking in 2007 and again in 2008. The impact of Porter's first class was immense as two members, Zakuani and Anthony Ampaitakwong, were named to the Freshman All-American team, Blair Gavin was selected for the US U20 National Team and Michael Nanchoff was a high school All-American.



The '08 class features three players with national team experience, three All-Americans, four region II ODP members and five all-state performers.

The Zips have also excelled in the classroom under Porter as



six players have been named to the all-conference academic team, including Elliot Bradbrook, who was named to the Academic All-America second team in 2007. Overall through the 2008 spring semester, the team has posted an impressive cumulative GPA of 3.119.

His first year at the helm of the Akron program saw him continue its storied tradition as the Zips posted a 13-5-1 record and claimed a share of the Mid-American Conference regular season title. It was the ninth time in 14 years that Akron earned at least a share of the conference crown.

Porter, just the sixth head coach in the heralded men's soccer program, came to the Zips from Indiana where he spent six seasons as an assistant coach for the Hoosiers, four of which came under legendary head coach Jerry Yeagley and the last two under Mike Freitag.

During Porter's tenure, Indiana won two NCAA titles (2003 and 2004), made four NCAA College Cup appearances and captured five Big Ten regular-season championships. Over those six seasons Indiana tallied a record of 98-25-14 (.766).

"I'm honored and privileged to be named the head coach at the University of Akron," Porter said at the time of his hiring. "It's a dream come true. I couldn't be more excited to work at such a fine academic institution and be able to coach at one of the top programs in the country. I'm looking forward to the challenges and hope to build on the current success."

Porter's soccer pedigree caught the eye of the Akron administration.

"We are excited Caleb is joining the Akron Athletics family," UA Athletics Director Mack Rhoades said at the time of his hiring. "He is a proven winner having demonstrated great leadership as both a player and coach at one of the nation's top programs. Caleb is a quality individual and will serve as a great role model for our student-athletes."

As Indiana's recruiting coordinator, Porter helped compile a recruiting class that was rated No. 1 in the nation in 2005 by *College Soccer News* and *StudentSportsSoccer.com*. The talent he attracted to the Hoosiers included four national players of the year, 14 Youth National Team members, 18 All-Americans and 12 state players of the year.

A 1998 graduate of Indiana with a degree in sports management, Porter was a four-year letterwinner in the midfield for the Hoosiers. He was just the second three-year captain in IU history and was the runner-up for the 1997 Hermann Trophy, awarded to the nation's top collegiate player.

The three-time All-Big Ten selection was chosen by the San Jose Clash as the 26th overall pick in the 1998 Major League Soccer Draft. He spent one season in San Jose and one year with the Tampa Bay Mutiny before a knee injury ended his career in 2000.

During the MLS offseason in 1998, Porter served as an undergraduate assistant coach at Indiana while finishing his degree. That season IU won the Big Ten regular-season and tournament titles en route to



**THE PORTER FILE**



**WITH AKRON HEAD COACH CALEB PORTER**  
 2007 MAC Coach of the Year

**COACHING CAREER**

| YEAR       | SCHOOL (POSITION)  |
|------------|--|
| 2006-Pres. | <b>University of Akron (Head Coach)</b><br>• 2007 MAC Coach of the Year<br>• 2007 MAC Tournament Title and NCAA Tournament berth<br>• Two MAC Regular Season Championships |
| 2000-05    | <b>Indiana University (Assistant Coach)</b><br>• Two NCAA Titles<br>• Four College Cup Appearances<br>• Five Big Ten Championships   |
| 2003-05    | <b>Bloomington Cutters Soccer Club</b><br>(Coach and senior age group trainer)<br>• Back-to-Back State Championships   |
| 2001       | <b>Indiana Men's State Team (Coach)</b>  |
| 1998       | <b>Indiana University (Student Assistant Coach)</b><br>• National Champions  |

**CAREER COACHING RECORD**

| YEAR         | SCHOOL           | OVERALL              | MAC                 |
|--------------|------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 2006         | Akron            | 13-5-1               | 4-1-0               |
| 2007         | Akron            | 15-4-2               | 4-0-1               |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>TWO YEARS</b> | <b>28-9-3 (.738)</b> | <b>8-1-1 (.850)</b> |

**PLAYING CAREER**

| YEARS   | TEAM   |
|---------|--|
| 1999-00 | <b>Tampa Bay Mutiny (MLS)</b><br>• Career-ending knee injury   |
| 1998-99 | <b>San Jose Clash (MLS)</b><br>• 26th overall pick in 1998 MLS Draft   |
| 1996-97 | <b>U.S. National "B" Team</b><br>• Bronze Medal, World University Games in Sicily, Italy   |
| 1993-97 | <b>Indiana University</b><br>• Runner-up for 1997 Hermann Trophy (National Player of the Year)<br>• Three-time captain (second in school history)<br>• Three-time All-Big Ten selection<br>• Member of four NCAA Tournament teams<br>• Two College Cup Appearances |

an NCAA Championship.

"As a coach, Caleb is a tremendous recruiter – as fine a recruiter as I've had," Yeagley said. "He is one of the bright stars of this profession. As a player he was one of the best leaders I've had. He is a natural leader, and was a fierce competitor. He always held himself and his teammates to a high standard. Akron is a natural fit for Caleb, and this announcement is a win-win situation for both parties."

Since 2003, Porter has served as a coach and senior age group trainer with the Bloomington Cutters Soccer Club, winning an Under-18 Indiana state championship in 2004 and a U-19 state championship in 2005.

Porter is a native of Kalamazoo, Mich. He resides in West Akron with his wife, Andrea, and their newborn baby, Colin.



**WHAT TYPE OF CHARACTERISTICS DO YOU LOOK FOR IN RECRUITS?**

Obviously, talent is the first thing we look for. But specifically there are four pillars that make up a soccer player: 1) Technical 2) Tactical 3) Mental and 4) Physical. Ideally you look for a player who is talented in all of those areas. However, if they are not high end in all aspects of the game we look for someone that really stands out somehow. It also comes down to being effective when they play the game in whatever their role may be. Beyond soccer specific talent and potential, which is important, it is imperative that you look at character and winning qualities just as much. Talent alone does not necessarily mean an athlete will fit into a team and help you win games. Lastly, you have to look at the total package and a prospects' personality off the field. What type of student are they? Are they a good person? Typically, they all go hand in hand and usually what they do off the field correlates to their success on the field or vice versa.

**WHAT IS YOUR FEELING ON SYSTEM OF PLAY AND HOW THE PLAYERS AFFECT THAT SYSTEM?**

First of all, the system should fit the players not the players fit the system. What's most important is putting your players in roles that allow them to be successful. From year to year a coach must be able to adapt their system to get the most out of the players individually and collectively. I like to look at my players as pieces to the puzzle and if you adopt the right system everything fits together. It is also my belief by teaching multiple systems it helps your players to have a more thorough understanding of the game and allows for more flexibility in what you can do game to game or year to year.

**WHAT STYLE OR BRAND OF SOCCER DO YOU LIKE TO PLAY?**

In terms of our style and identity at Akron, we want to play a very organized, disciplined and high pressing defensive game. One of the staples of Akron soccer is that our players will be fit and work very "hard", however, they must defend as a unit and that means working "smart". On the other side of the ball we want to be known for playing a very attractive, attacking brand of soccer. Offensively, I like to allow freedom for players to express themselves through individual flair and creativity.

**WHY WOULD A RECRUIT CHOOSE THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON?**

This is a very exciting time to be a part of the University of Akron. The University has invested more than \$300 million into changing the landscape of campus. Our administration is committed to men's soccer and they have taken the necessary steps to ensure our program will be nationally competitive. Our current facilities are state of the art and a brand new soccer stadium is on the horizon. Akron has a strong tradition in men's soccer and we are very proud of the program's success over the 52 years of existence. This success is something the community has embraced and is evidenced by the strong attendance we receive at all of our home games.

**WHAT DIRECTION DO YOU SEE THE PROGRAM HEADING IN FUTURE YEARS?**

Our goal is to win a national championship and to be considered a mainstay amongst the best programs in the country year in and year out. We are building the program to realistically accomplish these goals and I am confident we are taking the necessary steps towards making our vision a reality. I am excited for the future of Akron men's soccer and believe fans will like the direction we are heading these next several years.



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## COACHING STAFF



### DAVE GIFFARD

**ASSISTANT COACH**

Third Season

MacMurray, 1999

**D**ave Giffard is in his third season on the Akron coaching staff. Giffard's duties include working with the goalkeepers where he has been instrumental in the continued development of All-America and All-MAC goalkeeper Evan Bush.

Prior to Akron, Giffard spent one season as a volunteer assistant at Indiana, working primarily with the Hoosiers goalkeepers. During his time at



IU he also had a hand in assisting with all aspects of the program, including fund raising, community relations, scheduling and video analysis. Under his direction, IU goalkeeper Chris Munroe led the Big Ten in shutouts and goals-against average.

Before going to Indiana, Giffard spent five seasons as an assistant coach at Conference USA member University of Alabama-Birmingham. During his tenure the Blazers posted a 60-29-16 overall record, making a pair of NCAA Tournament appearances, including a Sweet 16 run in 2001. UAB was also ranked among the top 10 in the nation all five years of his tenure.

Working mainly with the goalkeepers in his five seasons at UAB, Giffard's charges had a goals-against

average of 1.04 with 36 shutouts. Two of his keepers, Clint Baumstark and David Clemente, went on to sign Major League Soccer contracts.

While at UAB, Giffard also served as a soccer coach and skills director at the Vestavia Hills Soccer Club in Birmingham, Ala., and spent 2004 as the head coach of the Alabama Olympic Development Program. His '89 Steamers were four-time state champions.

Giffard began his coaching career at his alma mater, MacMurray (Ill.) College, in 1998. From 1999-2000 he served as the assistant men's soccer coach at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, leading the squad to 12 victories. He was also the head coach and director of goalkeeping for the Missouri ODP in St. Louis from 1999-2000.

A 1999 graduate of MacMurray College with a degree in physical education, Giffard went on to earn a Master of Arts in Education from UAB in 2003. He holds a USSF "B" license, as well as an NSCAA Advanced National Diploma.

### THE GIFFARD FILE

#### Coaching Career

| YEAR      | SCHOOL (POSITION)                                  |
|-----------|--|
| 2005      | Indiana (Volunteer Assistant Coach)                |
| 2000-04   | University of Alabama-Birmingham (Assistant Coach) |
| 1999-2000 | Westminster College (Assistant Coach)              |
| 1998      | MacMurray College (Assistant Coach)                |



### JARED EMBICK

**ASSISTANT COACH**

Second Season

Indiana Wesleyan, 2000

**J**ared Embick begins his second season on Caleb Porter's staff, after coming on board in July, 2007.

Prior to joining the Zips, Embick spent four seasons as the head men's soccer coach at Missouri Baptist University. There he oversaw operation of the entire soccer program, including practice planning, recruiting, scheduling, fundraising, budget planning and development and academic monitoring.

During his four seasons the men posted a record of 47-21-8, including the program's first NAIA regional tournament berth in 2003. In 2006, the school achieved its highest-ever national ranking at No. 7.



In addition, Embick took over head coaching duties for the women's program in 2006. In all he spent six years with the Spartans, including two seasons as a graduate assistant (2000-01) and one season as assistant coach (2002) with the men's program.

While at Missouri Baptist, Embick also served as assistant coach for River Cities FC of the Women's Premier Soccer League (WPSL). There he assisted with practice planning and recruiting, helping to lead the squad to a 13-2-1 record in its inaugural season and an appearance in the WPSL national final.

Embick has kept active at the club level, working as a part-time staff coach with Metro United (2000-06) and Marion Lightening (1999).

His experience at the collegiate level includes serving as a staff coach with the Indiana University Soccer Camp (2001-05) and the Duke University Soccer Camp (2003).

A 2000 graduate of Indiana Wesleyan, Embick was named an All-American by the National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA) in 1998 and 1999. He was also an NAIA honorable mention All-America honoree in 1999 and was twice named to the all-Mid-Central Conference squad.

### THE EMBICK FILE

#### Coaching Career

| YEAR    | SCHOOL (POSITION)                                |
|---------|--|
| 2003-06 | Missouri Baptist University (Head Men's Coach)   |
| 2006    | Missouri Baptist University (Head Women's Coach) |
| 2006    | River Cities FC (Assistant Coach)                |
| 2002-03 | Missouri Baptist University (Assistant Coach)    |
| 2000-02 | Missouri Baptist University (Graduate Assistant) |



**OLIVER  
 SLAWSON**

**VOLUNTEER ASSISTANT COACH**

Third Season

Leeds Carnegie Metropolitan, 2003

**O**liver Slawson is entering his third year as a volunteer assistant coach at Akron.

A native of Manchester, England, Slawson earned his Master of Science in Education at Akron in 2006. Prior to coming to the Zips he spent the 2003 and 2004 seasons as an assistant coach at Kenyon College. He has also spent the past five summers coaching at clinics in Ohio and with the Ohio FC Soccer Club and in southern Maryland, as well as previous coaching spells in France.



Slawson graduated from Leeds Carnegie Metropolitan University in Leeds, England with a degree in Business and Management in 2003. While at Leeds he was a four-year member of the soccer team which won the Northern Universities League title three times and the Northern Universities Cup twice.

Before attending Leeds, Slawson was selected for the Lancashire County Football Association U-19's and represented Oldham Athletic Football Club of the English Football League at academy level.

Slawson currently holds the Advanced Regional Diploma from the NSCAA.

**THE SLAWSON FILE**

**Coaching Career**

| <b>YEAR</b> | <b>SCHOOL (POSITION)</b>                        |
|-------------|---|
| 2006-08     | University of Akron (Volunteer Assistant Coach) |
| 2003-04     | Kenyon College (Assistant Coach)                |

**MEN'S SOCCER SUPPORT STAFF**



**BRETT DRAPER**  
*Athletics Trainer*



**PAUL WARNER**  
*Media Relations*



**MOMODOU DARBO**  
*Team Manager*



**LLOYD MAHACHI**  
*Team Manager*



**CHRIS SMITH**  
*Team Manager*



**LIZ SCHUETT**  
*Equipment Manager*



Since taking over prior to the 2006 season, UA's coaching staff has posted a 28-9-3 overall record (.738), a 8-1-1 (.850) mark in the Mid-American Conference, captured a pair of league regular season titles in addition to a MAC Tournament championship.



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## 2008 ROSTER INFORMATION

### NUMERICAL

| No. | Name                   | Pos. | Yr.-Elig. | Ht.  | Wgt. | Hometown (High School/Last School)                   |
|-----|------------------------|------|-----------|------|------|--|
| 0   | Josh Pantazelos        | GK   | Fr.-HS    | 6-0  | 180  | Birmingham, Ala. (Vestavia Hills)                    |
| 1   | Evan Bush              | GK   | Sr.-3L    | 6-3  | 185  | Concord, Ohio (Lake Catholic)                        |
| 2   | Aaron Henkle           | MF   | Fr.-HS    | 5-10 | 160  | Carmel, Ind. (Carmel)                                |
| 3   | Andrew Tipton          | D    | Sr.-3L    | 6-1  | 180  | Uniontown, Ohio (Lake)                               |
| 4   | Kofi Sarkodie          | D    | Fr.-HS    | 5-9  | 155  | Huber Heights, Ohio (Edison Academic Center [Fla.])  |
| 5   | Ossie Michalsen        | D    | Sr.-3L    | 6-0  | 170  | Bergen, Norway (Soccer Academy of Danielsen)         |
| 6   | Darlington Nagbe       | F/MF | Fr.-HS    | 5-9  | 165  | Lakewood, Ohio (St. Edwards)                         |
| 7   | Blair Gavin            | MF   | So.-1L    | 6-0  | 165  | Franklin, Tenn. (IMG[Fla.] Academy)                  |
| 8   | C.J. Kaufman           | MF   | Jr.-2L    | 5-9  | 145  | Tucson, Ariz. (Salpointe Catholic)                   |
| 9   | Michael Nanchoff       | MF   | So.-1L    | 5-8  | 150  | North Royalton, Ohio (Walsh Jesuit)                  |
| 10  | Anthony Ampaipitakwong | MF   | So.-1L    | 5-8  | 160  | Carrollton, Texas (IMG[Fla.] Academy)                |
| 11  | Steve Zakuani          | F    | So.-1L    | 6-0  | 160  | London, England (Gladesmore Community School)        |
| 12  | Teal Bunbury           | F    | Fr.-HS    | 6-2  | 175  | Prior Lake, Minn. (Shattuck-St. Mary's)              |
| 13  | Ben Zemanski           | MF   | Jr.-2L    | 5-11 | 150  | Akron, Ohio (Cuyahoga Valley Christian Academy)      |
| 14  | Matt Tutich            | MF   | Sr.-3L    | 6-0  | 175  | Westmont, Ill. (Hinsdale Central)                    |
| 15  | Chris Barton           | D    | Fr.-HS    | 6-0  | 165  | Twinsburg, Ohio (Walsh Jesuit)                       |
| 16  | Chris Korb             | D    | So.-TR    | 5-9  | 160  | Gate Mills, Ohio (University School/Xavier)          |
| 17  | Hunter Dorton          | D    | So.-TR    | 5-9  | 160  | Bradenton, Fla. (IMG [Fla.] Academy/Central Florida) |
| 18  | Ivan Sandoval          | D    | Jr.-1L    | 6-1  | 185  | Rockford, Ill. (Guilford)                            |
| 19  | Stefan Ostergren       | F    | Jr.-2L    | 5-8  | 145  | North Canton, Ohio (Hoover)                          |
| 20  | Ryan Greenhill         | MF   | Fr.-HS    | 5-9  | 155  | Solon, Ohio (Solon)                                  |
| 21  | Thomas Schmitt         | F    | Fr.-HS    | 5-7  | 140  | Berea, Ohio (Berea)                                  |
| 22  | Enrique Paez           | D    | Jr.-SQ    | 5-9  | 173  | Bradenton, Fla. (The Pendleton School/Fla. Atlantic) |
| 24  | Cameron Carris         | MF/F | Fr.-HS    | 5-8  | 155  | Green, Ohio (Green)                                  |
| 25  | Matt Dagilis           | D    | Fr.-HS    | 6-0  | 180  | Akron, Ohio (Firestone)                              |
| 31  | James McCormick        | GK   | Fr.-HS    | 6-0  | 160  | Winter Park, Fla. (Winter Park)                      |

**Head Coach:** Caleb Porter; **Assistant Coaches:** Dave Giffard, Jared Embick; **Volunteer Assistant Coach:** Oliver Slawson

### ALPHABETICAL

|    |                        |      |
|----|------------------------|------|
| 10 | Anthony Ampaipitakwong | MF   |
| 15 | Chris Barton           | D    |
| 12 | Teal Bunbury           | F    |
| 1  | Evan Bush              | GK   |
| 24 | Cameron Carris         | MF   |
| 25 | Matt Dagilis           | MF   |
| 17 | Hunter Dorton          | D    |
| 7  | Blair Gavin            | MF   |
| 20 | Ryan Greenhill         | MF   |
| 2  | Aaron Henkle           | MF   |
| 8  | C.J. Kaufman           | MF   |
| 16 | Chris Korb             | D    |
| 31 | James McCormick        | GK   |
| 5  | Ossie Michalsen        | D    |
| 6  | Darlington Nagbe       | F/MF |
| 9  | Michael Nanchoff       | MF   |
| 19 | Stefan Ostergren       | F    |
| 22 | Enrique Paez           | D    |
| 0  | Josh Pantazelos        | GK   |
| 18 | Ivan Sandoval          | D    |
| 4  | Kofi Sarkodie          | D    |
| 21 | Thomas Schmitt         | F    |
| 20 | Andrew Tipton          | D    |
| 14 | Matt Tutich            | MF   |
| 11 | Steve Zakuani          | F    |
| 13 | Ben Zemanski           | MF   |

### PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

|                        |                   |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| Anthony Ampaipitakwong | am-PIE-pitak-wong |
| Matt Dagilis           | dah-GILL-us       |
| Enrique Paez           | PIE-ez            |
| Josh Pantazelos        | pant-ahh-ZELL-os  |
| Matthew Tutich         | TOO-tich          |
| Steve Zakuani          | zah-KOO-ah-nee    |
| Ben Zemanski           | zuh-MAN-skee      |

### BY STATE/COUNTRY

**OHIO (13):** Chris Barton (Twinsburg), Evan Bush (Concord), Cameron Carris (Walsh Jesuit), Matt Dagilis (Akron), Ryan Greenhill (Solon), Chris Korb (Gates Mills), Darlington Nagbe (Lakewood), Michael Nanchoff (North Royalton), Stefan Ostergren (North Canton), Kofi Sarkodie (Huber Heights), Thomas Schmitt (Berea), Andrew Tipton (Uniontown), Ben Zemanski (Akron)

**FLORIDA (3):** Hunter Dorton (Bradenton), Enrique Paez (Bradenton), James McCormick (Winter Park)

**ILLINOIS (2):** Matt Tutich (Westmont), Ivan Sandoval (Guilford)

**ARIZONA (1):** C.J. Kaufman (Tucson)

**ALABAMA (1):** Josh Pantazelos (Birmingham)

**INDIANA (1):** Aaron Henkle (Carmel)

**MINNESOTA (1):** Teal Bunbury (Prior Lake)

**TENNESSEE (1):** Blair Gavin (Franklin)

**TEXAS (1):** Anthony Ampaipitakwong (Carrollton)

**ENGLAND (1):** Steve Zakuani (London)

**NORWAY (1):** Ossie Michalsen (Bergen)



Despite posting the fourth-highest win total in school history and sweeping both the Mid-American Conference regular season and tournament titles a year ago, the '07 campaign was a bitter sweet one for third-year head coach **Caleb Porter**.

"At the University of Akron, we will never be completely satisfied unless we achieve our ultimate goal of winning a national championship," Porter said.

Such is the case for an Akron program – already steeped in tradition and a history of excellence, including league records of 10 regular season championships and five MAC Tournament titles – that has risen to the ranks of the nation's elite under Porter's watch.

"I have been very pleased with our progress over the last two years," Porter said. "Although I felt we were capable of going further in the NCAA Tournament last season, our program has transformed into a realistic contender for a national championship."

Since the 2005 season, the Zips have posted the best winning percentage in the nation with an overall record of 45-10-7 (.782). Furthermore, the Zips have been able to accomplish this despite a fluid roster that has shuffled 27 all-league performers in-and-out over the past three seasons, including the past three MAC players of the year.

With the graduations of the 2007 MAC Player of the Year, Corey Sipos, and four other all-league starters, Porter and his staff will once again have to find the right mix in 2008 without compromising the momentum gained last fall.

"One of the keys to our success last year was having six seniors with experience and the leadership qualities to help integrate an extremely talented freshmen class," Porter said. "However, I think we have a very similar situation this year with four very experienced seniors still in the mix."

For the second straight year, Porter and his staff have secured the fifth-ranked recruiting class in the nation, according to *CollegeSoccerNews.com*. Of that group, three players have national team experience, three are All-Americans, four are region II ODP members and five are all-state performers.

"We expect the new crop of freshmen to make an immediate impact but with the leadership of our upperclassmen and sophomore class having a year under their belts, we are confident that our team chemistry will again be a cornerstone of the '08 group," Porter added. "It also helps to bring in freshmen that are mature beyond their years."

If this year's group of newcomers is anything like the '07 class, which produced a pair of CSN All-Freshman team honorees in **Anthony Ampaipitakwong** and **Steve Zakuani**, the Zips should be in good shape once again for '08 and beyond.

Zakuani, the 2007 MAC Newcomer of the Year, paced the UA club with six goals, including three game-winners, 65 shots and 39 shots on goal while starting all 21 games.

Ampaipitakwong was one of the top playmakers in the nation last year with a league-best nine assists. The midfielder led all freshmen in that category (0.43 assists/game) while finishing 32nd overall.

"Steve Zakuani and Anthony Ampaipitakwong



With an overall record of 15-4-2 in 2007, the Zips, who were ranked as high as 17th in the nation last year, further established their standing as a consistent national championship contender.

are special players and it was no surprise when they made their presence felt immediately as freshmen," Porter said. "Because of their flair, creativity and attacking instincts they will continue to spearhead our attack as two of our key playmakers.

"At the same time I expect them to play an even larger role as sophomores and they have worked very hard in the offseason to be more dangerous in the final third. They have made great strides and their maturation should correlate to increased goal production this fall."

**DEFENDERS**

The backbone of Zips' success in '08 could very well be what has become a hallmark of Porter's Akron teams – a stingy defensive unit that frustrates its competition with sound individual and collective defending.

"We take pride in being organized, disciplined and honest on the defensive side of the ball," Porter said. "I believe in an aggressive high pressing defensive philosophy and our players must be very fit and have a high level of work rate and transition in order for that to work."

Last season, UA's defense produced 12 shut-outs and was ranked eighth in the nation with a goals-against-average of 0.59. But with the departure of four senior defenders, one of the keys to the Zips' season will be to quickly fill the gaps in the backline.

"Our primary focus in pre-season will be to evaluate our potential options so that we can find the right chemistry, coordination and understanding as a unit" Porter said. "In saying that, we return two senior defenders with significant experience as starters and their leadership will be valuable as we expect to have several new players in the mix."

Spearheading the Zips' defense will be three-time, all-league first team selection **Ossie Michalsen**, who has started 52 games in an Akron uniform.

"Ossie returns to anchor the team as one of

our team captains and we will rely on his leadership, experience and intelligence to provide a stabilizing presence," Porter said. "He has consistently proven himself as one of the top defenders in the MAC and is one of the best natural leaders I have ever worked with."

Fellow senior **Andrew Tipton** also returns to bring a wealth of experience as a starter in numerous defensive roles throughout his career.

"Andrew should fit right in at the center back position and we will not miss a beat," Porter said. "Ossie and Andrew are a great combination and have already developed a natural chemistry together. Whereas Ossie is the cerebral player and his strength lies in his tactical awareness and reading of the game, Andrew is more of a ball winner and an athletic and tenacious defender who also brings a presence in the air."

Porter and his staff will once again look to infuse youth into the experience-heavy lineup for the two remaining back positions.

Sophomore **Chris Korb**, who missed the '07 campaign due to an injury after transferring from Xavier, figures to compete for one spot. Korb appeared in 18 games as a freshman in '06 and earned 15 starts.

"Chris really fits the mold of what we are looking for in our outside back," Porter said. "He is an elite athlete and has the ability to lock down any opponent but also has the range to get forward into the attack and create problems for teams with runs on the flanks."

The competition for the final position should be one to watch as the season progresses. True freshman **Kofi Sarkodie**, who is a multi-year member of the U.S. National Team and spent last summer touring South America with the U18 team, may get the first crack.

"Kofi brings a lot to the table with his experience at the international level," Porter said. "He is another player that possesses all the intangi-

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## SEASON OUTLOOK

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bles as a natural leader and intense competitor.

"Kofi is mature beyond his years and will have the confidence and tactical insight to step in from day one."

Another newcomer who could find his way into the lineup sooner rather than later is **Chris Barton**.

"Chris will be one of our most athletic players on the team and what's also exciting is he has the technical ability to go along with his incredible pace," Porter said. "He will get a strong look early on because of his versatility to play any position in the back and I wouldn't be surprised if he finds his way into the lineup."

A host of other youngsters, including **Matt Dagilis**, **Hunter Dorton** and **Aaron Henkle**, will also compete for increased roles while **Enrique Paez** and **Ivan Sandoval** will provide depth to the talented group.

### GOALKEEPERS

While it may take some time to find the ideal combination in the backline, Porter knows exactly what he's getting between the pipes.

"**Evan Bush** is without question one of the best goalkeepers in the country," he said of his senior tri-captain and first team All-MAC performer. "Because we defend well as a program, Evan doesn't always garner the credit he deserves because he often times is not put in the position to make many saves. However, I have all the confidence in the world with him in goal and it is comforting to know he is there to bail us out if need be."

Bush became the school's all-time wins and shutouts leader last season to further entrench himself as one of the best 'keepers ever to wear an Akron uniform.

"You never want to rely on your goalkeeper to win you games, but he might be called upon to make some key plays in the early going as we find our cohesiveness defensively," Porter added.

Redshirt freshman **Josh Pantazelos** and newcomer **James McCormick** will battle for the reserve role.

"Josh made good strides this spring and has proven he can step in and perform at the level we are looking for," Porter said. "James has a great upside and is quick off his line and a strong shot stopper."

### MIDFIELDERS

A game is often times won or lost in the center of the field and UA's midfielders – with equal intensity for attacking and defending – are a disruptive force to any opposing game plan.

Veteran tri-captain **Matt Tutich** figures to be the leader of this unit after having played three years in the attack. The Illinois-native has started 51 games in an Akron uniform and has totaled 17 goals and seven assists for this career.

"Matt's engine, strength holding the ball under pressure and air play offers our team qualities that will be very beneficial," Porter said. "He also has a knack for getting on the end of service in the box and finding ways to score goals."

For the second straight season, Ampaipitakwong will serve as the team's primary playmaker

in attacking midfield.

"Anthony is a creative player who brings final-third instincts," Porter said. "He understands how to dictate rhythm with his possession and at any given moment can unbalance a team off the dribble or with his passing. He had an outstanding freshmen year but now that he is 100 percent healthy, I expect him to be even more dangerous especially in creating goals not only for others but also himself."

Sophomore **Michael Nanchoff** – another standout from the heralded '07 recruiting class – and newcomer **Darlington Nagbe** will also be in the fold in the attacking midfield.

"Michael is another skillful player who brings a lot to the table," Porter said. "He is very technical in tight spaces and probably the best long-range passer on the team. He also adds another weapon on restarts with service on set pieces and dead balls."

Nagbe was rated the 21st-best recruit in the country by *Rise Magazine*, scoring 18 goals with 10 assists in 2007

"Darlington will certainly be another option in our arsenal in the attacking midfield and also up top," Porter said. "He is a very smooth, fluid player with tremendous awareness and composure on the ball. His overall athleticism and deceptive change of pace might also bring a different dimension to our team in certain games."

Deeper in the midfield, the Zips will rely on the leadership and ball winning of **Ben Zemanski**.

"Ben has one of the best overall engines on our team," Porter said. "Over the course of a game, he will break of up a lot of the opposing teams' attacking buildup."

Zemanski appeared in 20 games for the Zips last fall, with four starts. He recorded three goals, including the game-winner against UNC-Greensboro on Sept. 29.

"His presence in the air will be a valuable asset through the run of play and on restarts as well," Porter added. "As our most dominant defensive midfielder, Ben will be a crucial player this fall and our team effectiveness is at it's best when he's on the field."

Providing the perfect complement to Zemanski's disruptive skills, sophomore **Blair Gavin**'s abilities make the team go from a defensive midfield position.

"Blair has exceptional range and covers a lot of ground both sides of the ball," Porter said. "Where Ben is more of the destroyer, Blair is the connector. In our system, his greatest attribute is his possession which allows our backs to link into the midfield during build up. Once he is on the ball, his ability to roll out of pressure and change the point of attack with either foot is high end."

Other players who will provide depth are **C.J. Kauffman**, an upperclassman who understands the system and brings bite on the defensive end, and freshman **Ryan Greenhill**, who has potential to develop into a impact player in a defensive midfield role.

### FORWARDS

While controlling the possession and dictating the rhythm of the game are important, none of it matters if you cannot put the ball in the net.

"The No. 1 job of the forwards is to create

goals and I am confident we have the pieces in place this year to produce a lot of goals this fall," Porter said. "The depth at this position is something we have not had during my time here and it's comforting to know if things aren't clicking or goals aren't coming easy that we can make changes to spark something."

"At the same time in a two-front alignment, the effectiveness of forwards often times depends on the understanding they have with each other and it will be important for us to develop chemistry while we introduce new players into the fold."

Leading the charge for the exciting group is the fluid and creative skills of Zakuani, who enters the season with a year under his belt.

"Steve has already begun making a name for himself as one of the most dangerous and exciting strikers in nation," Porter said. "His pace and ability to beat players off the dribble make him capable of breaking the game open at any time."

Another youngster who looks to be a difference-maker up top is true freshman **Teal Bunbury**, who was listed as the 20th-best prospect in *Rise Magazine*.

"Teal provides a physical presence and has a goal-scorers mentality," Porter said. "His ability to play with his back to goal and get on the end of service also adds a new dimension to our attack."

Veteran **Stefan Ostergren**, a junior on the club, saw his playing time nearly doubled in '07 and is expected to be in the mix for significant minutes this fall.

"Stefan is our best conditioned player year in and year out and has proven to have a nose for the goal," Porter said. "This offseason he also made great strides on the technical side of his game and continues to develop a better understanding of the position."

Redshirt freshman **Cameron Carris** and true freshman **Thomas Schmitt** will also compete for playing time.

### OVERVIEW

The Zips return six starters and 12 letterwinners to a team that has its eyes set on college soccer's ultimate prize in '08. With the experience gained a year ago, a challenging schedule against some of the nation's elite programs – including an opening weekend against Notre Dame and Indiana at the IU Classic in Bloomington, Ind. – and a calculated mix of talented and exciting players, the Zips appear poised to take that next step.

"We will certainly see how good we are right out of the gates, facing some of the top programs early on," Porter said. "It is my belief that in order to reach our potential as a team we need to face the toughest competition possible."

Following the opening tournament, the Zips will host West Virginia and Cincinnati before heading out west to face New Mexico and Missouri State.

"By the time we start conference play we should be hitting our stride," Porter said. "I have confidence that this team can stack up with anyone in the country and this schedule should provide an incredible opportunity to accomplish our season goals."