

# Can Mosen find new Rhythm?

*Former coach returns to helm and inherits a very young team*

BY POUL SWAIN



The way the season opener started for the Tennessee Rhythm, no one could have faulted Coach Brett Mosen if he briefly second-guessed his decision to return to the team that he last coached back in 1995.

The Rhythm fell behind after just 17 seconds against the Indiana Blast when a seemingly harmless ball was misplayed by rookie goalkeeper Brian Covey, and Blast forward Matt Ogden pounced to stick it in the net.

But Mosen, who returned to Tennessee after stints as head coach with Lincoln (PDSL) and Southwest Florida (D3 Pro), didn't lose faith, and his patience was rewarded with a pair of goals, the first by midfielder Doug Schenkel and the winner in overtime by player-assistant coach Danny Rebuck, who had come on as a late sub.

"The way we fell behind early and then battled back, it showed a lot of character for a young side," said Mosen, whose team fell back to earth in its next game, a 4-1 away loss to the Milwaukee Rampage.

Tennessee is the oldest, continuously operating club in the USL, though that doesn't mean it's been easy.

Founded in 1989 by Lynn Agee and Devinder Sandhu as an indoor franchise, the Nashville Metros played in the old Sunbelt Independent Soccer League with moderate success. The Metros eventually moved outdoors to the Premier Development League in 1991 and then leapt-frogged to the A-League in 1997.

The Metros made the playoffs each of their first two seasons in the A-League, winning the Central Division title with a 20-8 record in '98.

**PARKER PULLS OUT.** But the team almost didn't make it in 1999.

After plans to move the team to Memphis fell through, the Metros board of directors and majority owner and CEO Steven Parker voted to suspend operations just before the start of the season. The team was revitalized when Agee, Sandhu and another former owner, Dan Lucas, stepped forward to save the franchise.

The Rhythm finished 11-17 last season, tailing off at the end with four straight losses to miss the playoffs.

The offseason has brought several new sponsors on board, and the ownership group, which now also includes Ken Premo and Ken Renner, is wooing more investors to help shoulder the burden of trying to make pro soccer work in Tennessee.

"We want to be around for another 11 years," said Mosen, who last season was an assistant coach with the Hampton Roads Mariners. "We see a lot of other clubs going out of business. The tight budget makes my job more challenging, but that's reality. Everything is stable. We're working hard to get to where we want to be, but it's going to take small steps."

Rebuck, an Englishman, is the oldest player on the team, at 31. Schenkel, a 28-year-old Memphis native, and he are the veterans on what is a young squad.

Covey (Memphis University) and Jeremy McClure (Georgia Southern) are two rookies on the Rhythm.

"[McClure] is very raw," Mosen said, "but he has tremendous speed. He's a goalscorer who will develop with time into a name player for the league."

**DEVALL MOVES UP.** Jeremy Fedor had seven goals with the D3's Carolina Dynamo last season and scored the lone goal against Milwaukee. Other potential impact players are Pasi Kinturi, the '96 PDL MVP out of Campbell University, and defender Chris Brady, another Englishman. Both arrived with Mosen from Hampton Roads.

Mosen had also hoped to count on midfielder Danny DeVal, who last season had four goals and an assist for the Rhythm despite missing seven games with a knee injury.

DeVal, however, has caught the eye of Colorado Rapids coach Glenn Myernick, who has called the speedster up to MLS twice already. DeVal, another University of Memphis product, has yet to play for the Rhythm this season, but he has already played twice for Colorado, including a start in the Rapids' 5-2 loss to D.C. United.

"[DeVal] goes with our blessing," Mosen said. "We wish him every success."

*(Poul Swain is an associate editor at Soccer America.)*



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**Tennessee captain Doug Schenkel hails from Memphis. At 28, he is one of the veterans on a young Rhythm team.**