

## UIS' Longo wants to carry on family coaching tradition

By **RON DICKERSON**

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Quincy native Anthony Longo was destined for soccer long before he was born.

His grandfather, Frank, was involved in coaching on the high school and college level in the River City. His father is the head coach of the girls team at Quincy Notre Dame High School, and his uncle holds a similar post with the Quincy boys team.

"I told my grandma that grandpa must be turning over in his grave to know I was coming over here to school," said Longo, a senior member of the University of Illinois Springfield men's soccer team.

Frank Longo set the family legacy bar even higher by leaving NAIA soccer with the "Longo Points," which is a scoring system used to rank teams for the NAIA national tournament.

"It's kind of cool to hear the Longo system and know people are referring to my grandfather," Anthony Longo said.

Despite the love and respect Anthony Longo has for his grandfather, he knows he made the right decision in choosing UIS.

"When we were looking at schools, my dad mentioned UIS, so before visiting we came over and watched a game," Longo said. "After that, it was a done deal; I knew I wanted to come here."

The history major and secondary education minor with a 3.0 grade-point average wants to teach when he graduates in the spring and get into coaching at the high school level.

"Anthony is a great person, a great student-athlete to represent this university," UIS coach Joe Eck said. "He's a gifted athlete, and his size and strength helped him accept the role of winning the 50-50 balls and the head balls in the midfield.

"We're not a very big team, a tall team, so we rely on him quite a bit. The games we do well are the games he's been effective at winning balls in the air."

Longo, one of three UIS players 6 feet or taller, is going to take a beating on nearly every ball in the physical Great Lake Valley Conference, but the tradeoff is worth it to him to be on the first Prairie Stars team to play in NCAA Division II.

"This is special season," Longo said. "To be on this team and to bring in a new era is great for the school and should be fun. Last year was exciting, too, as it was our last season in the NAIA. It didn't end well, and it still hurts thinking about it."

The Prairie Stars lost in the first round of the American Midwest Conference to Harris-Stowe on penalty kicks.

"Without a doubt, Harris-Stowe was the most disappointing loss I've experienced here," Longo said. "We had our best team since I've been here and to lose to a team we beat 3-0 earlier in the year was so disappointing."

Longo said the team's goal is to finish in the top eight of the GLVC. That would ensure a berth in the conference tournament, since UIS is ineligible for NCAA postseason play.

"It's a realistic goal," Longo said. "We have to stay healthy. We have good players coming in. To be the first (UIS) team in the GLVC tournament would be very special."

Ron Dickerson can be reached through the sports department at 788-1545.

Thursday's game

SCORE: St. Francis 2, UIS 1 (OT) at Kiwanis Stadium

SCORING: St. Francis — Tony Sallese (Matt Gorecki assist), 16:04 left in regulation; Matthew Neucuinski (Stephen Michaels), 3:31 left in first overtime;

UIS: Anthony Longo (Michael Waldo), 55 seconds into game.

NUMBERS: Shots — St. Francis 17, UIS 18. Corner kicks — St. Francis 10, UIS 7. Saves — St. Francis (Bobby Markatos) 5; UIS (Jeremy Carnes) 7.

SHINING STARS: Longo; Waldo; Carnes.

QUOTE: "We wasted too many opportunities. We created a ton of chances. But you have to put the ball in the net. We kept them in the game. We need to do a better job of finishing our opportunities. We had so many great chances outside the 6." — UIS coach Joe Eck.

RECORDS: UIS 1-1, St. Francis 1-1-1.

NEXT GAME: Sunday, 2:30 p.m. — UIS at Rockhurst, first game in the Great Lakes Valley Conference.

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