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Rich Sparling Named WPSL Commissioner

Experienced soccer executive and coach promoted

Oklahoma City – A proven executive with extensive experience in growth of the game, Rich Sparling has been named commissioner of the Women’s Premier Soccer League, WPSL President Sean Jones announced Tuesday.

Sparling was promoted from associate commissioner, a position he held since 2013. He is the league’s second commissioner and replaces Jerry Zanelli, who formed the league in 1998 and retired in September.

“Rich has experience with this level of soccer, both the men’s and women’s side, that gives him a unique perspective on the WPSL,” Jones said. “Many of those involved in the league already know and are comfortable with Rich. We think he is the perfect person to help guide us through the transition in league ownership, and we have an even brighter future with Rich as our commissioner.”

As associate commissioner, Sparling oversaw WPSL’s non-business operations including scheduling, score reporting and rules enforcement. More than 30 clubs joined the league during Sparling’s four-year tenure

“I have enjoyed being involved with the WPSL and the atmosphere that Jerry Zanelli created,” Sparling said. “I know that with the new ownership there will be heavy emphasis on business operations and gameday standards that will not only enable the WPSL to continue to grow but become more respected within the soccer industry.

“In a day when everyone seems to be at each other’s throats, I also hope to inspire diplomacy and sister/brotherhood in the way that teams compete with each other.”

Sparling has worked in soccer as a coach or administrator for more than 37 years. He has coached BuxMont Torch FC (Perkasie, Pennsylvania) in the National Premier Soccer League (NPSL) the past four seasons. He was also a coach for the Torch’s WPSL side from 2009-13.

Sparling, active in his faith, will continue as the Philadelphia Phillies’s chaplain, a position he has held since 2000, as well as pastor at Community Bible Fellowship of Roxborough Baptist Church. He and his wife, Beverly, have been married for 39 years and have two children, Richard and Brittany.

Fluent in Spanish, Sparling worked for CrossWorld in the Dominican Republic from 1991-98. Prior to living in Latin America, Sparling served as athletic director at Plumstead Christian School from 1982-88 and coached soccer and baseball at Philadelphia College of Bible.

Sparling graduated from Temple University in 1981 with a Masters of Education in Sports Administration. His undergraduate studies took place at Northeastern Bible College, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Bible/Ministry in 1976.

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