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Development Academy**Dillon Powers and Ruben Luna Named Development Academy Players of the Year**

- ***Powers Set to Travel to Argentina With U-20 Men's National Team on July 23***
- ***Luna Led All Development Academy Players with 37 Goals in 28 Regular Season Games***

CARSON, Calif. (July 15, 2009) – On the last day of group play at Finals Week, U.S. Soccer has announced FC Dallas Juniors forward Ruben Luna and Andromeda midfielder Dillon Powers as Development Academy Players of the Year. The awards were voted upon by Development Academy clubs and U.S. Soccer National Staff Coaches and technical advisors.

Both players were instrumental in their team's successful seasons, but each plays a different role. From his forward position, Luna scored 48 percent of his team's goals on the year to lead FC Dallas to Finals Week, while Powers is Andromeda's engine in the midfield, working hard on both sides of the ball to lead his team to a top finish in the Texas division.

Luna has continued his scoring at Finals Week, netting a goal in FC Dallas' 3-0 win against the New York Red Bulls that kept the team in the hunt for the final. The Garland, Texas, native credits the Academy for his development as a player over the past two years.

"The games are so competitive and I think that, not just me, but my entire team has gotten better from playing in Academy games," said Luna. "The program is definitely more of a challenge, but that also makes it more fun."

His coach, Development Academy Coach of the Year, Oscar Pareja agrees.

"Ruben has become much more responsible and much more fit this year," said Pareja. "He's getting into good habits, the Academy is teaching him what he needs to do to succeed as he goes on in his career."

Powers has spent time with the U.S. U-18 Men's National Team and was part of the squad that won the Australia Youth Olympic Festival in January. He also recently returned from a trip to Egypt with the U-20 Men's National Team, where he helped the team earn a win and a draw against the 2009 FIFA U-20 World Cup hosts.

Powers also earned 2008-09 Gatorade Boys Soccer Player of the Year honors before his whirlwind year came full circle with the Development Academy honor.

"This past year I've developed more than any other year in my career," said Powers. "Last year I wasn't part of the national teams and I'm just thankful for the opportunities that I've had. I'm enjoying the time right now and trying to be satisfied as I'm working toward the next goal, but it goes to show, I think from my experience, that the Development Academy can really help players."

U.S. Under-20 Men's National Team head coach Thomas Rongen considers Powers a player that will be under serious consideration as he puts together his team for the FIFA U-20 World Cup later this fall.

"There is something about his ease on the ball, his tactical awareness during the game," Rongen said. "He's got good soccer intelligence over 90 minutes, he's a good athlete, a strong player, and those are important components to succeed on the highest levels."

Finals Week features the top 16 teams determined over the course of a nine-month Development Academy season. Eight teams in both the Under-17/18 and Under-15/16 age groups are battling through group play, looking toward the championship matches on Thursday, July 16, and Friday, July 17, with both televised live on ESPN Classic. For [complete coverage of everything happening](#) at The Home Depot Center throughout the week, including daily updates, streamed games, full episodes of Studio 90, photo galleries and game recaps, visit ussoccer.com.

The Development Academy was created to enhance the player development environment for elite youth players in the United States, according to U.S. Soccer Best Practices, with specific focus on increasing the number of training sessions, decreasing the total number of games while increasing the number of quality games and maintaining the highest level of coaching, refereeing and competition available in an everyday environment.

In its second year, the Academy program has already dramatically impacted the player development process in the United States. In 2008, more than 100 players from Academy clubs were included in U.S. Youth National Teams and almost 800 graduates from the inaugural Academy class participated in college soccer the following fall. Virtually all college programs use the Academy program as a scouting vehicle and the program has received increased attention from professional scouts representing domestic and international clubs.

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