



With help from Project Coach, Springfield's Loeb Rosario learns from professional coaches with USA Basketball

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SPRINGFIELD – It might not take a coach to know one, but coaches seem able to sense leadership when it's nearby. Thus, Loeb Rosario.

Loeb Rosario

Rosario, now 19, was an eighth-grader at Chestnut Accelerated Middle School in Springfield when his gym teacher picked up on his talents and steered him into **Project Coach**.

"He said, 'I guarantee it will be the best opportunity ever afforded you,'" Rosario recalled as he prepared to depart for Colorado and a stint with USA Basketball, the national team that competes for the U.S. in the **Olympics**.

Founded by two **Smith College** professors, Project Coach cultivates Springfield youths for coaching sports. The teenagers work with even younger students in the Springfield public schools.

Rosario, who has been with the program for six years, was coaching a group of elementary school students when he caught the eye of Koby Altman, then the assistant coach of the Amherst College basketball team. Altman saw potential and helped Rosario along.

Now the personnel manager of the Cleveland Cavaliers NBA team, Altman used his ties with USA Basketball to get Rosario a gig this spring. In his week in Denver, Colorado, Rosario met professionals like Iowa high school coach Don Showalter and David Craig, the trainer for the Indiana Pacers.

"Coach Don was really great when it came to coaching, but he was even better at encouraging others to share their opinions and share in the team's success," Rosario said in some reflections he wrote upon his return to Springfield.

"He ran his practices according to what the team needed help with and was always ready for practice."

Rosario said he got a thorough education at the USA Basketball camp.

"I did laundry, recorded video, helped with the editing, made sure the players were up for practice and in bed for eleven, passed out snacks, jumped in on drills, cleaned the gyms, filled water, set up gyms and helped the trainer," he said.

He even got a taste of what it is like working with teenage athletes who might become NBA stars.

"It was really hard at times when they behaved like children, but in my mind I had to continually remind myself they are young," he said.

Rosario, who is studying exercise and sports studies at Springfield Technical Community College, said Project Coach always seemed like a natural fit.

"I've always been interested in coaching," he said. "It's always been a passion."

If he enjoys serving as a role model for younger kids, he enjoys watching them develop even more.

"It's one of the best experiences I've ever had," Rosario said. "Having them look up to you makes you a better person."

Best of all, he said, is when some of those youngsters come back a few years later and become coaches themselves.

"It's really great to see," he said.

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