

# Bouna Coundoul, B.S.'05

## It's Bouna Time!

By Carol Olechowski

Colorado Rapids goalkeeper Bouna Coundoul is really getting a kick out of life.

Since joining the team in 2005, the Senegal native has built a loyal following. And he credits the University at Albany, which made it possible for him to “get a degree and play soccer,” with helping to him to launch his career as a professional soccer player.

“Back home in Senegal, everything is soccer,” remembered Coundoul, who came to the United States at age 14 and lived with his three older brothers in The Bronx. “Everybody played, so automatically, you play.”

When it was time for college, “UAlbany was my first choice.” He majored in information science, minored in French and

devoted plenty of time to the soccer team. “You need time to play. You have to put everything into it, and really focus,” Coundoul observed.

At the University, he “took a giant step to get closer to my goal. The coaching staff and my teammates gave me a little bit of a taste of the

pro environment. I learned a lot from [head coach] Johan [Aarnio] and [assistant coach] R.J. [Bever]. I was lucky to be part of the team,” said Coundoul, who was ranked one of the top college players during his years at UAlbany.

Toward the end of Coundoul’s senior year, “Coach made some phone calls” to pro soccer teams. Later, “I got a call from the Colorado Rapids. I joined the team

for one week and trained with the players, and was offered a four-year deal.”

Coundoul is testimony to the power of positive thinking: He has wanted to be a professional soccer player “since I was six years old. I was always telling people I would be a pro someday.”

Positive thinking also played a role in the creation of Coundoul’s rallying cry, “It’s Bouna Time!” He explained, “We were doing some shooting drills, and I said, ‘Say, guys, it’s Bouna Time today!’ The phrase caught on. Spectators now chant his name, and, when asked, ‘What time is it?’ they roar, ‘It’s Bouna Time!’”

Coundoul is using his personal motto to assist kids in his hometown, Dakar. In conjunction with the Rapids Foundation, the team’s charitable organization, he designed jerseys imprinted “Bouna Time.” Coundoul also autographs the shirts, which are sold at Rapids games. “The fans are really supportive,” reported the 25-year-old soccer star, who sends the proceeds back home to benefit children there.

Soccer, Coundoul pointed out, “is a year-round sport. We start out in February, and the season goes all the way to November. We are on the road a lot.”

Lately, he has been traveling even more than usual. Last fall, Coundoul was invited to Paris to play with the Senegalese National Team, which competed Nov. 17 and 21 against the teams from Mali and Morocco, respectively. Senegal won the earlier match with a score of 3-2 but lost the second, 3-0.

In 2007, Coundoul became the only team member ever to receive two player awards from the Rapids. He hopes that his success will encourage UAlbany to “pay a little more attention” to its soccer program. The University, he noted, “has some talented players, and soccer is the fastest-growing sport in the U.S. It is just like the rising sun; you cannot stop it.”



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Bouna Coundoul wows spectators at Colorado Rapids games.



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