

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: US Youth Soccer Communications at communications@usyouthsoccer.org or 1-800-4SOCCER



US Youth Soccer Alum Shares Secrets of Pro Success in Europe

USYS Olympic Development Program Experience Led Chris Richards on His Path to the Pros

FRISCO, TX (February 3, 2021) – Every journey has a beginning and Christopher Jeffrey Richard's story is no different. From his early days in Alabama (AL) as a budding star within US Youth Soccer (USYS), Richards always dreamed he'd make it as a pro player. Today he's living that dream as a defender for FC Bayern München in Germany's Bundesliga professional soccer league (now on loan to TSG 1899 Hoffenheim), and as a member of the US Men's National Team.

Growing up playing in the US Youth Soccer system, Richards played briefly with Birmingham United Soccer Club (AL), with the bulk of his youth experience with Hoover Soccer Club (AL). He played for Texans SC Houston (TX) in 2016 and eventually joined MLS club FC Dallas Academy (TX) in 2017. He was quickly signed by FC Dallas in April 2018 and was invited by his new team to tryout with FC Bayern München in May 2018. By that July he was offered a one-year contract to play in Munich on loan from Dallas and took the \$1.5 million offer instead of accepting a scholarship to the University of North Carolina.

His pro career quickly accelerated as he played as a regular starter for FC Bayern's Under 19 team, made his debut with the 3 Liga club on August 19, 2019 and on June 20, 2020 saw his first action with FC Bayern München of the Bundesliga, becoming the first American to start a match in the team's history. With FC Bayern München he's now won a German league championship, UEFA Super Cup and the German Super Cup as well as playing in the UEFA Champions League.

Richard's success as a pro translated to the US Men's National Team as well, with his debut for the U.S. Men's Under 20 team in May 2018, with a roster spot on the 2018 CONCACAF U-20 Championship team. In the 2019 FIFA U-20 World Cup, Richards started all five matches and played four complete games, including a surprise defeat of France.

In November 2020 Richards was named to the U.S. Men's National Team and saw his first in-game action during a friendly with Panama, while earning Player of the Game accolades by USMNT coach Gregg Berhalter.

Sebastian Korst, Managing Director US Youth Soccer Europe sat down with Richards to learn more about his experiences with US Youth Soccer, his growth as a player in the USYS Olympic Development Program (ODP) and his future plans.

Richards: "Everything happened so quickly. Playing now with Boateng, Lewandowski or Muller in every training or game!"

Korst: "It must feel like a dream come true. Truly you are a great example of how USYS ODP can not only help players in their personal development as they compete with the best players in their age group, but also learn from professional and experienced coaches."

Richards: "ODP was a great opportunity. A door-opener and important people in the sport take note of it."

Korst: "USYS Europe is very proud to see you accomplish your goals. Your experience and success are why so many volunteers support the program. You are one of those players that everyone in USYS Europe would like to be...playing for one of the biggest clubs in the world, becoming a US National Team player...these are all great reasons why the American players living in Europe truly believe in USYS Europe and ODP to help them reach their goals."

Richards: "I am so very thankful to have the chance to play ODP. It was a huge accomplishment for me at that age and was very important for my development. USYS ODP gave me so much...the experience changed my life forever. But the road was not always easy."

Korst: "Eagerness to learn more from the best in the world has made you a success Chris. We look forward to even more success stories from you as the newest legend and veteran of USYS ODP."

About the United States Youth Soccer Association (US Youth Soccer):

US Youth Soccer, the largest youth sport organization in the country, is on a mission to provide world-class support, resources and leadership, helping every member fulfill their goals, on and off the field of play. US Youth Soccer registers nearly 3 million players annually. Through its programming, resources and leadership, US Youth Soccer is advancing the game for its 55 Member State Associations, 10,000 clubs and leagues and nearly 1 million administrators, coaches and volunteers. US Youth Soccer connects families and communities to the power of sports and its shared love of soccer. US Youth Soccer provides a path for every player, offering programs that provide a fun, safe and healthy environment for players at every level of the game. We Are Youth Soccer. For more information, visit www.usyouthsoccer.org.

About United States Youth Soccer Association Europe (US Youth Soccer Europe):

US Youth Soccer Europe provides an unparalleled, developmental, yet competitive soccer experience for American youth soccer players in Europe under the age of 18. USYS Europe unites players through the sport of soccer with positive local community relationships between the American players and local national youth teams. USYS Europe partners with ProSoc GmbH who are staffed with former professional, and English speaking, German players as well as UEFA-licensed coaches to foster physical, mental, and emotional growth and development. USYS Europe is recognized by USYS as the exclusive premier competitive soccer organization in Europe for American players.