

Linzoain reflects on season with Pro Team

Academy Features News

Riverhounds Staff

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Pablo Linzoain takes the field in his senior-level debut with the Riverhounds on June 1, 2024, against Indy Eleven at Highmark Stadium. (Photo: Chris Cowger/Riverhounds SC)

Though the USL Championship season has ended, **Pablo Linzoain** is still competing for the Riverhounds. For now, it's back with the Riverhounds Development Academy.

Linzoain, 18, signed a USL Academy contract for the 2024 season in May, which allowed him a spot on the Riverhounds while protecting his amateur status. The high school senior was part of the Hounds' First Team all season, and he made his debut at the pro level at Highmark Stadium on June 1 against Indy Eleven, the first of two matches he appeared in.

Looking back on his first season with a professional team, Linzoain recognizes the importance of this personal milestone, but he also values the time spent getting to know the team.

"The highlight for me personally was making my debut. That was probably my favorite moment, but there were also a lot of times just in the locker room, just talking to the guys, just having fun, things like that," Linzoain said. "And definitely, whenever we locked in, making playoffs, and we took the picture with the Steel Army (after defeating El Paso in the regular-season finale), that was a great night as well."

Linzoain is eager to take the lessons he learned from the professional team and apply it to his training with the academy. The biggest lesson he learned from coach **Bob Lilley** was that playing at the professional level requires full effort.

“I definitely learned a lot about the pro environment overall, just like always being ready for every day at training, and you can never really have a day where you cruise through,” Linzoain said. “I don’t cruise anymore. In training, I’m always focused and ready to do 100 percent, every time I train.”



Edward Kizza attempts to win the ball from Pablo Linzoain during a Riverhounds training session on Oct. 11 at Highmark Stadium. (Photo: Ryan Shaffer/Riverhounds SC)

After learning how to compete like a pro, Linzoain is ready to go back to the Academy. Though he won’t play in all the upcoming college showcases — Linzoain is already committed to Davidson University if he elects for the college route rather than turning pro — he stands to get plenty of playing time in upcoming matches with the 2006/07 ECNL Boys, the Hounds’ oldest top-tier academy team.

“I’m very excited. I’m ready to start playing in some games again. Honestly, I haven’t played games in a little while,” Linzoain said.

One of the events Linzoain and the ECNL Boys are preparing for is the Three Rivers College Showcase, hosted by the Riverhounds on Dec. 13-15. The Showcase is for older age teams to compete in a high-level competition at the end of fall, when many of the teams are just regrouping after the high school season.

College coaches will be attending all weekend to evaluate players at the showcase, and Linzoain is grateful for opportunities such as those which the Riverhounds Development Academy offers,

“The Riverhounds definitely helped develop me in the past four or five years. They have given me many opportunities for college and recruiting,” he said. “They have given me the best opportunities because they’ve recommended me for things like the (ECNL) National Selection Game and the ECNL national event in California.”

But as he rejoins players his own age, Linzoain is now in a position where he can take his professional experience and share it with the rest of his teammates.

“It kind of makes me feel like I have to take more of a leadership role, and I can show some of my teammates what the next level is, so that they can also be prepared,” Linzoain said.

Linzoain also is eligible to re-sign with the Hounds First Team on another USL Academy contract in 2025. But for now, the teenage midfielder can work on getting more match experience for himself, while also sharing his insight with teammates who aspire to make the First Team leap with him next year.

*Feature written by Riverhounds contributor **Jameson Keebler**.*



Pablo Linzoain tees up a shot during training with the Riverhounds Academy's 2006/07 ECNL Boys on Nov. 5 at AHN Montour in Coraopolis. (Photo: Julia Wasielewski/Riverhounds SC)