

# Rovira's tenure with Hounds is service with a smile

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*Dani Rovira signs an autograph for a fan after the Hounds' 2-0 win over Detroit City FC on April 27 at Highmark Stadium (Photo: Chris Cowger/Riverhounds SC)*

For six years, **Dani Rovira** has been an integral part of the Riverhounds' success on the field. And while his versatility on the field is an asset, the positivity he brings to the group off the field is just as valuable.

When you ask the players about Rovira, they laugh and mention that their teammate knows how to have fun.

"He's a good team guy, good locker room guy. I mean he's a very jovial, Spanish guy. He likes to have fun sometimes when we go on the road. He's a fun man," midfielder **Kenardo Forbes** said.

Nearly a decade ago, Rovira moved from his native Bogotá, Colombia, to tiny Dean College in Massachusetts at only 17 years old. He initially struggled to adapt to the new environment but soon found his stride.

"It was definitely a very challenging moment. I didn't really have much of the language, so coming in, it was hard to believe something could come out of it," said Rovira.

While he adjusted off the field, he stood out on it. As a sophomore, he was named to the United States Collegiate Athletic Association All-American Second Team after finishing third on the team with seven assists. From there, Rovira moved to the NCAA Division I level at the University of Vermont, where he played for the 2017-2018 seasons and appeared in 33 games with 23 starts.

The next step in Rovira's journey led him to sign with the Riverhounds in 2019. Transitioning to Pittsburgh was helped by Rovira already knowing of one important part of the Steel City.

"Once I first heard of Pittsburgh, I knew the Steelers already. You just know black and yellow," he said.



*Dani Rovira began his career in Pittsburgh seeing limited minutes in 2019, but in the years since, he has grown into a piece valued for his versatility by head coach Bob Lilley. (Photo: Chris Cowger/Riverhounds SC)*

But while football was his introduction to the city, Rovira's favorite aspect of Pittsburgh now is the people.

“I love how everyone, the community, is very welcoming. They’re very nice, and I really like the city. The people I have been able to meet here have not only welcomed me, my family, and my friends, but are really great people,” Rovira said.

This is Rovira’s sixth year on the Hounds, making him the second-most tenured player on the 2024 team behind Forbes, and he is now in the top 10 all-time for appearances on the team. His versatility makes him a key player, playing both wing back spots and sometimes in midfield or higher in wide positions. In 2023, he had his second consecutive season with five assists, making his career total 13, the most assists in team history by a defender.

“Sometimes **Bob (Lilley)** plays him in mid, left back, right back, attacking mid sometimes,” Forbes said. “He’s a versatile player, and he’s good technically, too. He’s good for the group.”

In that time, Rovira has worked to become a key player and leadership figure in this group. To him, the six years on the team has been a dream come true.

“I remember coming in, and the first time I came into my locker, I remember seeing **Kevin Kerr**, who was my teammate at that time, and just hearing that he had been here for six years, all these things,” Rovira said. “You hear it, and it sounds very nice, very amazing. I just put it in my head, as if it could be possible.”

Despite the pressure of performing on the field and the need to weather the ups and downs of a long season, Rovira is the guy that keeps spirits high. While he is fun to be around, the basis of his good attitude comes from a great amount of gratitude.

“I am somebody that is very thankful for everyday I get to get up. I am grateful to do what I love, and I’m healthy. So I come into the locker room, always sharing a smile, saying some jokes, pushing somebody around,” he said.





*Rovira has been a valuable player and also a positive locker-room presence who keeps things light, whether after a hard-fought game or filming a promotional video with Amo after training. (Photo: Ryan Shaffer/Riverhounds SC)*

Rovira doesn't only want to have fun, but motivate his younger teammates. For him, it's important that they realize how much there is about this team to appreciate.

"I think we've had a very good six years, and I'm very thankful for that, for what I've learned," he said. "Every day now, I try to share it with some of the guys that get to enjoy it now, compared to how it was a couple years ago, with everything new, everything different."

Rovira is in a new phase of his career as a veteran on the Riverhounds, but also a new phase in his personal life.

He recently married his longtime partner and fiancée, **Sam**, and for Rovira and his growing family, it was special to hit this milestone in Pittsburgh. The recent wedding was just another signal of the exciting future the city holds for him.

"My father and brother were able to come from Colombia. They haven't really visited me much, so to have them here and to (get married) in Pittsburgh is very special," Rovira said. "It

has been special for me now for so many years, and I'm excited to see how much more I can grow here."

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



*Dani Rovira and his then-girlfriend, Sam, smile for the camera before a 2023 match. The couple recently married in Pittsburgh, which has become a home for Rovira over his six years with the Riverhounds. (Photo: Mallory Neil/Riverhounds SC)*