

Zach Watson

Assistant Coach

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Biography

Helping Cal Poly achieve back-to-back historic campaigns during his first two seasons as a member of Oige Kennedy's staff, Zach Watson is in his third year as the program's assistant coach and goalkeeper trainer.

During Watson's initial 2024 season, Cal Poly set new program records for fewest goals conceded (13, six of which were penalties) and fewest goals per game (0.68) while recording nine shutouts. Last fall, Cal Poly matched a program record with 10 shutouts while conceding just 15 goals in 20 matches.

The results: back-to-back Big West regular season titles, 16 total victories and with Cal Poly's defense conceding multiple goals in a match just seven times in 39 outings.

Individually, Nicky McCune graduated with back-to-back Big West Goalkeeper of the Year honors (2024-25).

Watson arrived at Cal Poly after serving as the lead assistant coach at Division II Newberry (S.C.) College from 2021-23. Heading the team's development efforts, Watson also coached the program's reserve side, directing Newberry's second squad to the 2021 South Atlantic League title. With Watson on the bench, eight total Wolves earned All-SAC first team selection.

"Zach is a valuable addition to our program and complements the very diligent and extremely dedicated staff we have at Cal Poly," fourth-year Cal Poly head coach Oige Kennedy said. "He brings extensive experience in collegiate soccer from his Division I playing days and as a coach at the Division II and III levels.

"His expertise in the goalkeeper position has undoubtedly improved our keepers and in the short period he's been working with them, we can already see a positive impact. We're fortunate to have such a highly rated young coach with us in San Luis Obispo. With his strong work ethic and clear dedication to his profession, we're excited to see his continued growth with our program."

Watson – a native of Bridgewater, Mass. – spent the two years prior to his time at Newberry as an assistant coach with Division III Curry College (Milton, Mass.). While at Curry, Watson worked primarily with the program's goalkeepers, who led the Commonwealth Coast Conference in total saves during the 2019 season.

Concurrently, Watson served as an academy staff coach with Major League Soccer's New England Revolution and coached youth teams with Steel United.

With the Revolution, Watson ran goalkeeper programs with partnered clubs and town programs and oversaw the development of youth boys and girls goalkeepers between the U-8 and U-18 levels. He also worked alongside the academy goalkeeper director in the regional development school program to create and execute foundational-level goalkeeper training sessions.

Watson played collegiately at Division I Sacred Heart (Fairfield, Conn.) from 2014-17, graduating with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. He then played one graduate season at Division II Coker (Hartsville, S.C.), earning his master's degree in college athletics administration in 2019.

Watson currently holds his UEFA B License, USSF C License, a USC Advanced National Diploma and a Level 1 goalkeeper diploma. He's also a Regional level referee and has worked numerous high level competitions including the U.S Open Cup and MLS and USL preseason matches.
