

Press Release

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Local Girls Soccer Teams Crowned Regional Champs & US Youth Soccer National Finalists

First Tennessee teams to make national finals since 1995

Monday, August 20, 2012—Brentwood/Franklin, TN: Two Middle Tennessee area girls' soccer teams managed a feat that no Tennessee team has accomplished since 1995: a trip to the US Youth Soccer National Championship finals.

Brentwood Soccer Club 94 Premier and Franklin's Tennessee Futbol Club U14 Azzurri represented Region III (Southeast US) at the 2012 US Youth Soccer National Championship Series. Tournament champions were decided after three days of round robin play at the championship venue in Rock Hill, South Carolina.

Under-18 Girls: Brentwood Soccer Club 94 Premier

Brentwood Soccer Club 94 Premier completed a near-complete trophy sweep this season, claiming titles in the Tennessee State Cup and the Region III Championships. After defeating teams from Cincinnati (Region II) and Utah (Region IV) in the semi-finals, the girls faced Region I's FC Pennsylvania Strikers in the contest for the national title. Despite a tight early game, the Pennsylvania Strikers prevailed.



For Brentwood Soccer Club 94 Premier Coach Sandy Pollock, making it to national finals was a major coup. “This is a fantastic achievement for the girls and an incredibly exciting time to be part of a team from Tennessee,” he said. “This team was a regional finalist in 2011 and in 2010 they were regional semi-finalists. For the girls to end their club career as both regional champions and national finalists is an experience they will never forget.”

On-field success has made team members a magnet for scholarship money. Members of Brentwood 94 Premier will be playing at Clemson, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, University of Tennessee at Knoxville,

Texas Christian University, Middle Tennessee State University, Vanderbilt University, Duke University, Ole Miss,

University of Arkansas and others. “Every girl on the team has received a scholarship,” added Pollack. “Two of these girls have already beat upperclassmen in fitness tests—as freshman.”

Brentwood 94 Premier includes Carly Bowen, Kelsey Brouwer, Kelsey Campbell, Mackenzie Moore, Chesney White, Jessica Hiskey and Katherine Rodriguez from Franklin; Jaclyn Heckle, Margaret Howard, Cara Ledman, Christi Padget and Shelby Todd from Brentwood; Fayla Junior and Cailin Harris from Nashville; Allison Kington and Laura Foster from Knoxville; Lindsey Mayo from Hendersonville; Malinda Allen from Memphis; and Victoria Hawkins from Murfreesboro.

Under-14 Girls: Tennessee Futbol Club U14 Azzurri

For Tennessee Futbol Club U14 Azzurri, the journey to the national tournament started six years ago. “We put this team together when most of the girls were just eight, and it didn’t take long to realize that we had a very talented group of kids who loved soccer and loved playing together,” said Coach Laban Defriese. “We set goals to develop the girls as individual players, and then as a team. We set the bar high. We were determined to accomplish what no other Tennessee girls’ teams had ever done before on multiple levels of individual player development and team accomplishments.”



It didn’t take long for their efforts to pay off. “By the tender age of 12, the girls were playing a graceful, possession-oriented, creative, attacking style of soccer,” said Coach Defriese. “They were playing against and beating the best girls’ teams in the country. We knew we had something special. We felt if we kept working hard to develop as individual players (and they did), that winning a Regional and National Championship as a team was a real possibility when the time came. Two years later, at age 14, here they were competing in the National Championship Final game.”

In semi-final action, Tennessee Futbol Club U14 Azzurri tied the Ambassadors Ohio North (Region II), defeated the Maryland Coyotes (Region I) and tied California South Beach Futbol Club (Region IV). The Tennessee squad faced the Maryland Coyotes again in national finals, where the Coyotes prevailed. “It was an incredible moment for the girls and everyone,” said Coach Defriese. “When you make history, it’s an amazing, powerful, positive feeling you can’t describe. I couldn’t be more proud of our players and their families.”

Coach Defriese sees more success in the team’s future as they advance to the U15 level this fall. “By going to the national championship, this team has already earned a berth into the Elite National League comprised of sixteen of best teams in country,” he said. “If our team can finish in the top four after league play this year, they get an automatic berth back into the national tournament. There is no doubt in my mind this team can win the National Championship before they are done. They are a special team.”

Members of Tennessee Futbol Club U14 Azzurri include Callie McKinney, Angeles Engel, Meredith Slessman, Katherine Hassell, Abbie Kerr, Anne Claire Ballinger, Sydney Hunt and Jessica Harvey from Franklin; Karlie Paschall from Brentwood; Chamberlain Green and Carson Hood from Columbia; Ali Wyatt, Cameron Williams and Aracely Turcios from Spring Hill; Madison Louk and Maddison Falter from Murfreesboro; Mackenzie Peebles from Nashville; and Daniella Marcano from Atlanta, GA.

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About the US Youth Soccer National Championship Series – The US Youth Soccer National Championship Series provides more than 10,000 teams from US Youth Soccer's 55 State Associations the opportunity to showcase their abilities against the best in the nation while emphasizing teamwork, discipline and fair play. The yearlong competition begins with over 185,000 players in the US Youth Soccer State Championships. These champions and selected wildcard teams, through US Youth Soccer Regional Leagues, advance to compete in one of four the US Youth Soccer Regional Championships. Champions (U14 through U19) from each regional event advance to the US Youth Soccer National Championships. The Under-15 through 17 Boys and Girls age groups have two teams representative of the US Youth Soccer National League, in which the top two teams in each gender age group earn a direct path to the national championships. Overall the National Championship Series provides top collegiate coaches with the premier stage to identify and scout the most coveted players in the country.

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