

MILLBURN MAGIC



Press Release

Millburn, NJ, May 14th 2009

WPSL Kickoff this Sunday

The Women's Premier Soccer League season kicks off this weekend, with the Millburn Magic representing Northern New Jersey in the East Conference, and the Delaware Future visiting Millburn High School on Sunday (6pm kick-off).

The Millburn club's second season in the WPSL brings some continuity to an incredible year of change for women's soccer in New Jersey, with Sky Blue competing in their inaugural season at the professional level, the Northern NJ W-league team moving to the Hudson Valley in New York, and a change of ownership and coaching at the NJ Wildcats in southern jersey. Indeed, the Magic represent the only destination within the state for top amateur players north of Trenton, reflected in the talented array of "Jersey girls" wearing the blue and white this summer. With a team boasting an incredible thirty-one state and fifteen regional championships between them, the Magic can truly claim to be New Jersey's team, with two graduates of the Arsenal Academy in England representing the only additions to a roster made up entirely of players who grew up playing their club and high school careers in the Garden State.

Such success will be hard to repeat in the WPSL, widely recognized as the toughest league outside Women's Pro Soccer. Twenty-nine present or former WPSL players were selected in the recent WPS draft, including nine of the first eleven picks who now play their trade at the professional level. In addition, Sky Blue Head Coach Ian Sawyers is one of four WPS Head Coaches who came through the WPSL (California Storm 1993-98). Albertine Montoya (FC Gold Pride) won two national championships in the WPSL, while World Cup and Olympic Gold Medal winning coach Tony DiCicco (Boston Breakers) is still involved with SoccerPlus in Connecticut, and Matt Driver (Philadelphia 2010) reached the WPSL play-offs with AC Diablos in 2006 and 2007. Driver will be coaching the Philadelphia WPSL team against Millburn on July 8, while the Magic travel to a fully professional Boston Aztecs team on June 7th, representing the reserve team of the DiCicco's Breakers'.

Far from being daunted, Magic Head Coach Andy Sones is excited by the challenge. "The pro league has brought a whole other level to the women's game," he says, "and it's a challenge for our girls to step up. I don't know if playing soccer for a living is something they want to do, but the bar has been raised, there is a lot of talent in this team, and they have certainly proved their ability to compete at the national level". Keeping a relatively local team was also important to the Magic coach, who resisted the temptation to go beyond the state boundaries, instead staying with New Jersey talent as role models for the team's spectators and followers. "There are literally thousands of girls in our area who are aspiring to play a good level of college soccer" says Sones, "and we're bringing the best of that level to their doorstep, so they can see what it's all about. This is local, affordable family entertainment and a chance for the many youth players in the north of the state to come and see girls who - only a couple years ago - were playing for their clubs, in their leagues, at their high schools, and on the same fields as them".

Not only can today's youth players watch the Magic play, but in a true example of player development - some could soon be playing with them. Last year's captain of the Magic's YPSL winning U16 team, MarlyAnne Delargy this year made the jump to the senior team, along with Laura Kurash, another product of the Magic youth system. While Kurash will be starting her own college career in the Fall, DeLargy will be returning to Morristown High School as a senior captain, also playing within the Morris United program on the elite STA Screamin' Eagles team. As well as the two HS aged players on the roster, the Magic have a small group of eight talented young players from their youth programs training with them, mainly sophomores and juniors who will return to local high school and club programs better for their experience, while trying to join the Magic senior players at college programs as diverse as Harvard and Johns Hopkins, Marist and Monmouth. Last year, Chatham HS senior captain Biz Shenk was a Magic training player who impressed in team workouts, and ended up playing the last three games, before going on to her freshmen year at Holy Cross. Shenk is now on the full roster, needless to say, with much expected in the coming year. "That's what the process is all about", says Sones, who spent time coaching in the youth development program at World Champions Manchester United. "The senior team is focused on winning - but with a whole system underneath that dedicated to providing an opportunity for the best young New Jersey players to progress, play and compete at the highest possible level on their path to college soccer". With only a few days until the first contest, the local soccer community can rest assured that wherever they will be returning to in the fall, every Magic player will be fighting hard for New Jersey on the field this summer.

More about the Millburn Magic at
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www.millburnmagic.com
www.wpsl.info/



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