



The U18 girls from Everett-based Washington Rush Soccer Club are national champions after soundly beating an Oregon team 4-0 in the U.S. Club National Cup in Boise, Idaho on August 1st!

Despite 100 degree temperatures, the Washington Rush Girls U18 team breezed through the top “Super Group” division and gave up just one goal in four games. The team started strong with a 6-0 victory, each goal scored by a different player. Two more highly competitive games followed (2-1 and 1-0) before the resounding 4-0 victory over Eugene Metro FC. The team qualified for the National Cup in June by winning the U.S. Club Regional Championship at the 60 Acres field complex in Redmond.

“It was a challenge in 100 degree weather,” said Coach Ben Somoza, Technical Director for Washington Rush and a former Seattle Sounders and University of Washington player. “The halves are 45 minutes long and there is a strong fatigue factor.” He credits the extreme environments of recent tournaments in high-elevation Utah and humid Texas for preparing the team for Boise in the summer.

“Their fitness, preparation, and readiness to play were second to none. They gave their best performance of the year in the (National Cup) finals,” said Somoza.

National Cup was the teams seventh straight tournament win this year. Nearly half the players, who will be high school seniors this year, are already committed to play soccer for Division 1 or Division 2 colleges. Others will also likely play college soccer as they firm up future plans.

“It’s a long way to come for a group of 14-year-olds who joined together on a B team,” said Team Manager Tom Pendergast, whose daughter Louisa has been with the team for four years. In their second year together, the talented team went on to win the Washington State Championship Cup. Pendergast, who maintains an impressive team website (<https://sites.google.com/site/washingtonrushgu17nike/>), credits second-year coach Somoza for teaching a winning style based on “possession-oriented, one-touch ball.”

“This team definitely gets the ball down on the ground and is ball possession oriented,” agreed Somoza. “We talk about the best form of defense is to keep the ball. It also tires out other teams as they are always chasing after it.”

When asked what is next for his national championship team, Somoza had one word: “Rest”.

U.S. Club Soccer’s annual National Cup is one of only two national tournaments for players ages 12 to 17. This year, over 1,000 teams entered and 19 were awarded national championships in Super Group (most competitive) and Premier divisions.