TAMPA, Fla. - United Soccer Leagues announced today the acceptance of Georgia Rush, an affiliate of the largest youth soccer club in the world, into the Next Generation Series (NGS). The joint venture between USL and IMG Academy features a forward-looking, innovative, comprehensive, and unique program designed to develop the complete elite youth soccer player through a defined regimen of training, competition, testing, and evaluation.

As an affiliate of Rush Soccer, which covers 26 states and 10 countries, Georgia Rush is regarded as the leader in player development in Georgia and aims to be one of the best soccer clubs in the nation.

"I believe that if the [U.S.] is going to compete on the world stage in the next 10 years then its focus cannot be on the U16 and U18 age groups, it needs to be on the younger players," Georgia Rush Technical Director Russell Finch said. "Other leagues are focusing on initiating elite development leagues for 15, 16, 17 year olds when in Europe and South America they are signing professional contracts at this age. USL obviously understands the importance and has taken the initiative to implement NGS and its programs to ultimately educate and engrain good habits at an earlier age so that the final product is a complete one."

The Next Gen approach to total player development is the also the foundation upon which Georgia Rush was built. The Rush focus is to develop all 11 players on the field as soccer players who are comfortable with the ball at their feet, including the keeper. The 11 Rush Core Values prepare teams and players for the next level and the Next Gen Series will get them there even sooner.

The Next Gen Series is an exciting, new youth soccer initiative established to provide players, coaches and clubs the opportunity to take part in an the first elite-level league totally devoted to player development.

"We believe NGS is a perfect fit for us," continued Finch. "I am excited that NGS focuses on complete player development, unlike so many of the other leagues in place. It is going to further educate our players on the nutritional and mental toughness part of the game as well as evaluating

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them as athletes in an incredibly professional environment such as IMG."

The 2013 Next Gen Series format will consist of U12 and U14 boys and girls teams participating in an eight-month season beginning in August and culminating in April that will feature two evaluation/competition events at IMG. More than just another youth soccer league, top players will be identified through the NGS Player Tracking Program and invited to attend the NGS ID Training Camp at IMG presenting the unique opportunity for these elite soccer players to showcase their talents and train with distinguished IMG and NGS coaches.

The inspiration for the Next Gen Series was the repeated and consistent message received from top youth soccer clubs and coaches that they were seeking a fresh development initiative specifically geared toward younger teams and players. NGS was launched to fill the void by providing a comprehensive platform for clubs to best prepare their young players for the challenges which await them at the next level.

"The Next Gen Series is going to have a great impact on player development," former Major League Soccer player and NGS Director Abe Thompson said. "Georgia Rush is a premier club dedicated to developing players the right way. We share the same values and are excited to see the club, using the NGS platform, turn out elite players that will be the future of soccer in this country."

The world's largest and most advanced multi-sport training and education complex, IMG Academy hosted myriad soccer team training camps in 2012, including clubs such as the Seattle Sounders, D.C. United, Columbus Crew, Sweden's Malmö FF, as well as the U.S. Women's National Team preparing for the London Olympic Games and the Antigua & Barbuda Men's National Team preparing for World Cup qualifying.

To learn more about the Next Gen Series please visit www.NGSsoccer.com.

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