

In just over 8 weeks, Women's Professional Soccer teams will launch the new league that is hoped to become the global standard for women's professional sports.

The WPS Inaugural Match on March 29 will put the LA "Sol" against the Washington "Freedom" with live coverage on Fox Soccer Channel at 4:00 PM MST. Los Angeles' roster includes the Brazilian phenomenon, Marta, and the USA's Shannon Boxx as well as top college players and additions from China and Japan. The "Freedom" roster combines Abby Wambach and Cat Whitehill, who was here at the Rushmore Bowl in 2007, with an international lineup of players from Norway, France, Australia, Japan and outstanding college players.

The WPL will pack the week following this game with events and hype to shift the focus to the following Sunday's games across the league. On April 5, the St. Louis "Athletica" opens at home against the Chicago "Red Stars" and you could be there. Soccer supporters across the state are organizing a bus trip to St. Louis for this historic game. If 35 people sign up for the trip, the costs are quite affordable (about \$200 for the package based on 4 person occupancy) and you could be part of history. The package will include bus, hotel and game ticket. Details are still being hammered out with the professional teams working with hotels and tour companies to offer deep discounts.

Carol McFarland-Mckee is spearheading the negotiations with the teams. If you are interested, contact her at [carolmc2soccer@yahoo.com](mailto:carolmc2soccer@yahoo.com). Carol is the Deputy Director of Region II and has helped focus interest on Rapid City within the Region and the US Youth Soccer national organization. She is very anxious to see the WPL be successful and hopes that a trip like this would inspire South Dakota's young women to plan for professional play.

The "Athletica" roster has Renata Costa and Daniela from Brazil and Hope Solo and Lori Chalupny from the US national team as well as top college players from the US and Europe. Chicago stars are Christiane from Brazil; Kate Margraf, Carli Lloyd, Lindsey Tarpley, and Megan Rapinoe from the US national team, along with top stars from Sweden, England, and the NCAA. Remember Caroline Jonsson, the Sweden goalkeeper who was nearly impossible to outwit? She's playing for Chicago this year.

The game will be pumped with special events and souvenirs and international players are always exciting to watch. If you are interested in a lifetime memory, this could be it.