

The US Under 23 Men's team seeking to qualify for the 2008 Beijing Olympics has a final hurdle to cross today. The team held to a 1-1 tie with Cuba in their first game, tied Panama (1-1) and squeaked a penalty kick win out in the 95<sup>th</sup> minute of the game with Honduras. This win moved the US into the semi-finals against Canada who soundly defeated Mexico to win their group, 5-0. Catch the game tonight at 7:00 MDT on ESPN Deportes or Fox Soccer. The winners of the semi-finals go to Beijing.

After the Cuba-USA game, five members of the Cuban team slipped out the back door of their Florida hotel and defected to the US. Two additional teammates joined them later leaving the Cuban team with 11 players. Although most expected a forfeit at their remaining game, the team took the field with 10 players (one was suspended for card offenses) and these 10 players went the entire game without substitutions. The crowd applauded them at the final whistle.

Because the US has a strange policy regarding Cubans, these defecting players will be able to spend a year in the US and then apply for citizenship. If Cubans reach US soil, they get to stay, if they are intercepted before they get to ground, they are returned to Cuba. These players will stay in the US and have requested try-outs with MLS and USL teams; however they must first apply for asylum, negotiate the red tape of international transfers and wait for a call-up.

- All graduating soccer seniors may apply for the Bill Herbst Memorial Scholarship. Applications are due on April 1. The applications are available at the high schools and from Joyce Herbst at **joyceherbst@rap.midco.net**.
- The Grade 9 Referee class will be offered on Sunday March 30 at the LaQuinta Inn. Class runs from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. This is the beginning level of referees and all those who have taken the "Game Manager" class are encouraged to continue in referee training with this class. Anyone interested in becoming a referee should take the Sunday class and get started. It is open to anyone.

- Rapid City Youth Soccer League is still accepting registrations for U6 boys, U9 girls, U10 girls, U12 and above. Contact [www.rcysl.com](http://www.rcysl.com) for registration forms and other information.  
Games begin on April 1 so get the paperwork in so your child can have a healthy, fun spring.
- It may be March but planning for summer is important. You should save the dates of July 21-25 for British Soccer Camp. This unique experience is a favorite for kids in the Black Hills area and grows larger every year. You can register now at the RCYSL website.
- The games begin in a little more than a week. This is the time for all of us to have that face-to-face conversation with the mirror. As you gaze at the calm, pleasant face looking back at you, resolve that that will be the face your child sees on the sidelines all season long. Remind yourself that you are not the coach (unless you are one of the lucky parent/coaches) and you will remember to keep your comments to yourself. If you did not grow up playing this game, resolve to read the rules, take the referee class, or find online instruction to learn what your child is learning. Now, looking yourself directly in the eye, say “Good job. Did you have fun?” and practice it until you really mean it. Have a great spring season.