

Next week, on May 3, the Rapid City Youth Soccer League will host a soccer game between the Colorado Rapids Under 23 team and the South Dakota United. The Rapids team is part of the semi-pro development structure connected to the Colorado Rapids MLS program. MLS teams have increasingly adopted the “grow your own” concept and have elite training teams that reach to the U15 level in some areas. This U-23 squad will be interesting to watch.

South Dakota United is made up of top players from several locations around South Dakota. The team has been successful in some big tournaments and is looking forward to meeting the Rapids.

The evening will include other games from teams in the Hills area with those games beginning at 5:00 PM. In addition, these high level teams have offered a mini-camp for local players from age 5 to 12 beginning at 3:00 PM. You can register your players at [www.rcysl.com](http://www.rcysl.com) at a cost of \$10 per player.

The Scheels Cup registration deadline is May 1, next Thursday. Teams are guaranteed at least 3 games and local teams begin play on Friday evening. This will be a good experience for teams who are considering playing in the state recreation tournament, the Kohl’s America Cup, in early June. Registration information is available at the RCYSL website.

It is now official that soccer has been given “sanction” status by the SDHSAA. The seasons have been split, keeping the boys’ season in the fall while the girls’ moves to the spring. There are some unanswered questions here as organization and control of high school soccer moves from South Dakota State Soccer Association to the SDHSAA.

First, it is important to club players such as Rushmore Soccer Club, to know how this will affect their spring competition schedule. Club teams normally begin tournament competition in February, traveling as far as Arizona in some years, to prepare for the May Regional tournament and to which they have to commit in the previous fall . The SDHSAA rules state: “A student who is a member of a high school team may not participate in games, practice, tryouts, etc., that particular sport during the same season on an independent or

non-high school team or as a member of any “All-Star” team or completely unattached on an individual basis.”

There is a provision for individual waivers to protect a player’s eligibility for the season.

Second, how will the expenses of the program be met? Rapid City schools are in the midst of a difficult prioritization of programs and activities with more and more mention of “pay to play” solutions. Soccer parents need to make their voices heard in this planning process and perhaps actually use the “F” word...”football” in the discussion. High school football is very expensive to offer to a relatively few students. Perhaps there is some trimming possible.

Third, is a concern about the coaches. Soccer has a licensing system denoting the level of training a coach has successfully completed. New high school soccer coaches would need to hold nothing less than a “D” license to offer players an adequate experience. People who don’t have soccer experience will not be able to have this license prior to the 2010 season as it demands the prerequisite “E” license and a year of coaching in the interim. SDHSAA has no soccer-specific requirements for coaches.

Certainly, there are solutions to all of these concerns and we want the best for our high school programs. Kids deserve to have the opportunity to play for their schools.