

**Rushmore Soccer Club** teams will travel to compete in the Region II tournament beginning tomorrow in Sioux Falls. The U13 boys and girls teams along with the U16 girls will represent South Dakota in this prestigious competition and we wish them well.

Region II brings teams together from the square of 14 states between Kentucky and North Dakota. Teams compete on a state level to represent their state at this tournament. There are 4 regions across the country, each hosting a regional tournament with a combined economic impact of \$44 million. That's stimulus.

**The Confederations Cup** continues in South Africa. This tournament is a dress rehearsal for the next World Cup (South Africa 2010) and includes the top national teams from each confederation (think "conference") in the world according to FIFA. The US is representing our confederation, CONCACAF.

The tournament is organized by groups and the members of each group were chosen several months ago by drawing. The USA was drawn into a group with Egypt, Italy, and Brazil. Italy won the last World Cup and 2008 European Championship. Brazil has won the World Cup 5 times. The USA will learn a lot.

Italy began the instruction on Monday, winning 3-1 on two goals by a kid from New Jersey. Guiseppe Rossi, 22, was born in New Jersey to Italian emigrant parents. At age 13 he moved to Italy with an invitation to the Parma youth club system with the hope of playing for Italy. The USA did approach him prior to the 2006 World Cup but the young man had his heart set on Italy. He was invited to the senior Italy squad in October 2008 and after his performance on Monday, he's certain to continue on the roster.

Today, the USA meets Brazil. Brazil barely squeezed by Egypt on Monday (4-3) and may not be the powerhouse it has been. And pigs fly. The US will be fortunate to survive above the bottom of the group but the team will learn a lot from some of the best teachers in the world: Italy, Spain, and Brazil.

**Each national soccer federation** has the option of creating national teams at levels beginning at Under 16. They train and compete around the world in a model mimicking the senior national teams' schedules. The U17 boys' World Cup tournament is scheduled in October/November 2009 to be played in Nigeria. This week, a rebel segment in Nigeria murdered a local soccer star and announced that FIFA should reconsider staging the U17 World Cup because team security could not be guaranteed. The implied threat was clear.

Recent attacks on US oil company, Chevron, certainly indicate that a US team would be a prime target among the 24 teams attending. Withdrawing a team would likely mean a punishment for that nation. Once FIFA has declared the games on, attendance is compulsory. The safety of all these young players and the fans must be FIFA's paramount concern despite having declared this the "Year of Africa", assigning the Under 20 World Cup to Egypt and the World Cup to South Africa. FIFA has relocated competitions before on short notice and should do so again.