

About this time last week, a caravan of Rapid City families left for the USA Cup Weekend in Blaine, Minnesota. Among these families were the teammates of the Rushmore Soccer Club U13 Gold girls' team winding up a very successful season.

This team won the South Dakota championship and traveled to Rockford, Illinois in late June where they barely lost one of the few games of their season against the top- ranked team from Wisconsin. Ironically, they would finish the USA weekend by defeating the second-ranked Wisconsin team.

The USA Cup divides teams into two brackets based on the record of play from the preceding games. This is the fourth year that this team has entered the USA Cup and they were feeling more comfortable entering this huge, prestigious tournament. Teams come from all over the world to play and the weekend competition can mean 6 games in 3 days if you keep winning. Rushmore U13 Gold defeated Eden Prairie and Rochester, Minnesota clubs, a Winnipeg, Canada team, and then in the quarter finals were able to topple another Minnesota team, Edina Sting.

This record landed them in the semi-final round against the Aberdeen club, Northern Blast. Northern Blast had opted out of the South Dakota state competition and was an unknown opponent. The semi-final game went into overtime and, still tied, to a shootout. Rushmore's goalkeeper was able to stop two shots, thereby putting them in the final game against the Neenah Redwave from Wisconsin. Rushmore Gold U13 girls brought home the USA Cup with a 3-2 win capping a 26-3-8 (W-T-L) season.

Rushmore Gold U13 won the Casper Spring Jamboree in April, Billings' Magic City Classic and the South Dakota State Cup in May, and the Rushmore Cup in June. USA Cup Weekend made it a perfect 4-month streak.

This is an extraordinary group of young women who have been fortunate to have some excellent coaches in their experience in Rushmore Soccer. Brian Pitts started them out at U10, followed by Greg Drabek and currently, Doug Noyes. Noyes is particularly good coaching girls although he has taken boys teams as well. He is quiet on the sidelines (a lesson learned over time) and encouraging to all his players. His love of the beautiful game quickly spreads to his teams and this year, the U13 Rushmore Gold topped the largest youth tournament in North America. Noyes credits the girls with "the personal drive to improve their own game".

It is the mark of a good coach when players focus more on self-improvement than on winning. That change in focus is a lifetime skill that will help them with academics, job search, and all the curve balls life throws. Congratulations to players and families on a superb season and a vote of thanks to Coach Noyes and his assistant, Dennis Bailor.

Tomorrow is the deadline for fall RCYSL registration. You need to get the registration in or postmarked by midnight tomorrow. You can download the form online or register online. The sports stores have the forms also.

Players who have indicated a desire to play in the Challenge division should remember to be available on Monday and Tuesday, July 21-22 at the Upper and Lower Valley fields. The Under 10 Girls Challenge division is filled but there are spaces available on the U9 teams. Players will need to be in white shirts, soccer shorts, shin guards and cleats. Bring lots of water.

High school registration has been completed. Tryout dates are August 11-15. Check the Rushmore Soccer Club website for additional information and contact the team managers for times and locations. www.rushmoresoccerclub.com.