



On July 30, 18 Rush players from around the country flew into LAX. Here is a diary of the trip, and a story of 18 players from different states, backgrounds and cultures, all searching for one common goal, a Surf Cup championship.

July 30<sup>th</sup>

Players all met at LAX and travelled to the team hotel in Van Nuys, California. The Holiday Inn Express was the team base for two days while they played friendlies against Los Angeles teams in preparation for the tournament. At 7:30 p.m. the girls played a Los Angeles GU15 team who had just returned from Denver for National Premier League Championships. The game ended 2-1 Los Angeles Premier. The result was not important as the team played 20 minutes of each half in their default formation (4-3-3) and the last 15 minutes of the first half in a 3-4-3 imagining they were 1-0 down, and the last 15 minutes of the second half in a 4-5-1 imagining they were 1-0 up.



*“Understanding how to play when you are up or when you are down in the last 10-15 minutes of a game is important for any team or player. Sometimes coaches get frustrated that their teams can’t hold on to a lead or come from behind*

*when playing in a big game, but do their players really know how to change their approach and playing style to a game based on the score or the amount of time left? The only results that mattered were at Surf, the friendlies were an opportunity for the team to play together for the first time, as we only had 4 players that played in both tournaments, and understand how we were going to adjust our formation and style of play in Surf cup, based on the score,” said Head Coach Russell Finch.*

July 31<sup>st</sup>

The team was up early fighting Los Angeles traffic on I-405 headed to take on a GU12 Legends FC team that had 4 players, including the GK, that had just returned from Kansas with a GU13 National Ch



ampionship Medal. The girls lost 1-0 to a goal in the first minute of the second half. It was a game that saw the girls create 18 goal-scoring opportunities, 11 shots on target and 8 coming in the last 10 minutes. In the afternoon the girls had a tour of Hollywood, hiked Runyan Canyon for stunning views, and tried the famous Pink's Hotdogs.

August 1<sup>st</sup>

The team departed for UCLA to watch Real Madrid train, get autographs and have a recovery session to get all the lactic acid out of their legs from the past two games. Although the team arrived as the players were leaving the field, they did get autographs from World Cup and European Cup champions Xabi and Casillas. After the girls' recovery session they went to see Santa Monica and Venice beach. Here they got to see lots of interesting people, street performers

and got Henna tattoos. The team concluded their LA trip at around 8 p.m. and then departed for their team hotel in San Diego.

August 2<sup>nd</sup>

The day was spent in team meetings, enjoying a 360 degree view of San Diego from Mt. Soledad, lunch at Seaport Village, meeting up with old ID camp friends from Hawaii Rush at the Surf Cup fields and then the highlight of the day, the Padres vs NY Yankees game where the girls got to appear on TV.

*“To me it’s important to spend some time as a team doing things other than practicing or talking about soccer. We were able to practice many of the 11 Rush Core Values during the trip. From Enjoyment, by seeing much of So Cal, meeting Real Madrid players, and going to a MLB game, to Empathy, where the girls served water and snacks to homeless people in San Diego and Los Angeles. It’s obvious we were there to win the most competitive tournament in the country, but if we can we walk away with success both on and off the field, to me that’s a perfect scenario.”*



August 3<sup>rd</sup>

Day 1: Game 1 - Real So Cal ECNL. With 15 minutes to go and the teams 0-0, Rush gets a corner. As the ball gets cleared on a header by Real’s 5’11 center mid, #7, it bounces to their pacey forward who dribbles 60 yards, taking on 2 Rush players and goes 1v1 against DE Rush keeper, Kyra Glakas. Kyra saves and rebounds to a Real So Cal player who had transitioned into attack. With 10 minutes to go the formation changes to a 3-4-3, where the team sacrificed left back Nicole May to add another midfield player and push for a goal. Ashton Pugh (Tennessee Rush) plays a ball over the top and down the line for Emily Fontana who runs onto it and floats a ball to the back post, finding Chloe Kooker (Iowa Rush) who hits it into the hands of the Real So Cal keeper. Although more chances were created, it ended 1-0 Real So Cal. After the game the girls were introduced to the U.S. National Team scout Twila Kaufman who had been watching the girls play and walked over to say hi to an old friend, Head Coach Russell Finch, and grab a roster.



Day 2: Game 2 - San Diego Surf

Academy. The Rush girls dominated possession and created many chances from the first whistle to the final whistle. In the tenth minute, Brianna Martinez (New Mexico Rush) beat two Surf defenders and slots it in the far corner to put Rush up 1-0. Two minutes later, Syndey Schmidt plays an intelligent ball in between two defenders, finding Brianna's diagonal run who was consequently brought down from behind as she went in on goal. Brianna took the resulting penalty, knocking it into the inside of the post. Rush continued to dominate possession and created 21 goal scoring opportunities with 10 on target, 4 hitting the post and 2 off the crossbar. Confidence seemed extremely high going into the final group game.

August 4<sup>th</sup>

Day 3: Game 3 - Santa Rosa United ECNL, #6 team in the nation. While the girls warmed up, Real So Cal's game against Surf Academy ends in a 0-0 tie, which meant if Rush could beat Santa Rosa United, they would win the group and head to the Quarter Finals. The team was fully aware of Santa Rosa's National team forward's, potential, Alyiah Shields, and it would be Shields who potentially took away the girls' dream of winning Surf Cup in only the fourth minute. After yet another counter attack, Shields found herself 1v2 against Ashton Pugh (TN Rush) and Sydney Runeberg (TX Rush). Shields's pace, technical ability and determination was too much for the Rush Center backs and she slotted home the ball past goalkeeper Jasmine Richards (TX Rush). Pugh and Runberg were incredible the whole weekend, but a player such as Shields only needs half a chance or even half a yard to punish teams. With 10 minutes left in the first half the team switches to a 3-4-3 and goes searching for a tying goal before the half. With Sarah Anshutz (CO Rush) and Morgan Kloosterman (MI Rush) pressuring the ball high up the field, they force Santa Rosa's center mid to play a ball all the way back to the goalkeeper. Rush forward Emily Fontana (IA Rush) anticipates the pass, takes the ball, rounds the keeper and finds herself with an open net, but hits the ball just past the far post. In the second half Rush created many chances, pinning Santa Rosa in their own half and, off a well taken shot corner, Megan Gray (IA Rush) found herself on the top of the box where she struck the ball very well, but unfortunately the keeper tipped it

around the post. Sydney Runeberg heads the ball just wide in the resulting corner. With time running out, Rush again goes to a 3-4-3. Riley Whitaker (IA Rush) receives a ball out wide on the left from Bella Camarata (TX Rush) and dribbles at two Santa Rosa defenders. Whitakers skill and pace was too much for Santa Rosa, which led to a ball being whipped in the box at pace onto the head of Rush Forward Shayla Smart (FL Rush) who narrowly heads wide of the goal. In the last 7 minutes of the game, Rush created 5 good goal scoring opportunities, but just could not capitalize on them and ultimately lost the chance to win the group and head to the Quarter Finals.



On the last evening, the girls met for a final team meeting/debrief where much of what was discussed involved how to develop a winning mentality. The girls proved they are among the best teams in the country by the way they played and the chances they created, but when it came down to it, teams like Real So Cal who play in an environment like Surf Cup week in and week out, were better prepared for this type of environment. The girls' experience better prepared them for State Cup/Regionals with their own teams, but also has afforded them the potential to compete in the 2014 Surf Cup, which the team plans on attending and winning next year!

*“When the final whistle blew in the Santa Rosa United game, there were no tears, just disappointment. The girls were walking off the field absorbing all that they had created, and yet missed. We had dominated every game in terms of possessions and scoring opportunities, but the defining moments were the two goals we conceded and the ones we missed. We all wanted this so badly, we wanted to prove we were the best team in the country, but it slipped away, no mistake the opportunity was given, but quickly taken. This team is so talented and plays such an attractive style of possession and attack-orientated soccer. I want them to succeed so desperately because they completely deserve it.”*

The girls finished the trip by visiting the sea lions at La Jolla Cove and relaxing by the pool. In the morning, prior to flying home, the girls went and watched Santa Rosa advance to the final and be crowned champions. The girls reflected on what could have and probably should have, been their

Surf Cup Championship