The start of the Elite Clubs National League (ECNL - Girls) and US Soccer Development Academy (Boys) seasons are coming up. This week, rushsoccer.com will run a series of Season Preview articles for the Rush clubs participating in these Elite leagues. Today's installment, the Academy Boys from Colorado.

The Colorado Academy teams kick off the 2012/13 season on Sunday September 8th against cross-town rival Real Colorado. Below, Colorado Rush Technical Director Erik Bushey previews the season.

2011/2012 Recap:
Last year Colorado Rush maintained its streak of qualifying for the playoffs every year since the inception of the Development Academy. Each year the U18 Academy side from Colorado Rush has qualified for the playoffs (with the highest finish being 3rd place nationally). But last year the 18 boys lost their very last game of the year, needing a win to qualify for the playoffs. Fortunately, it was the U16 group, who for the very first time, qualified for the playoffs to maintain the impressive streak.

Club expectations for the upcoming season:
The solid group which comprised the playoff qualifying side from 2011-12 now represents the bulk of the U18 Academy team. This year the group hopes to improve upon last year's accomplishment and qualify for nationals to complete for a national championship. For the U16 group, made up of almost all Development Academy rookies, will look to dive in head first from the start. With the Colorado Rush being moved into what is perhaps the most difficult division in the country, a birth in the playoffs would have to be considered a great success for the U16 group.

Team to Beat:
Texas Rush is expected to provide a great challenge for their brethren Colorado Rush, but it would be naïve to look past the likes of FC Dallas who have been rated as the top club in the country by US Soccer.

Rush Players to Watch:

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U16 – Miguel Ruiz: An impact player on last year's U16 team, his attacking prowess may dictate the success achieved by this young team.
U18 – Liam O'Connor (pictured at right): A stand out goal keeper for the U18 team last year returns for an additional year of Academy soccer and will play a critical role in the U18 side achieving their lofty goals.

Thoughts on the upcoming season:
We are excited about the 10 month season and have long been a proponent of this schedule. We believe our players stand to prosper to a greater degree the more they are in our club environment. Now, not only are they in the club environment for a much longer period of time, they are in the Academy environment for a much longer period of time. We hope the combination is a winning one. Our players have chosen to make a great commitment to our club and to the Academy. And as a club our aim is to reward these players with extreme work, passion and attention and to help them achieve the goals which they have set forth.

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