





**GULF STATES
PREMIER LEAGUE**

PRIDE *of* ALABAMA

Five Birmingham area clubs form Alabama Pride Soccer with a goal toward giving elite players an extra outlet for competition, gaining attention

ALABAMA YOUTH SOCCER HAS TAKEN A GIGANTIC STEP FORWARD

as five Birmingham-area clubs have joined forces to form Alabama Pride Soccer, the newest member of the National Premier League. Consisting of participating members Briarwood Soccer Club (BSC), Homewood Soccer Club (HSC), Hoover Soccer Club (HSC), Trussville United Soccer Club (TUSC), and Vestavia Hills Soccer Club (VHSC), the mission of Alabama Pride is to change the competitive landscape of soccer for the elite player in the state by functioning together.

The formation of Alabama Pride is a historic moment in the evolution of youth soccer in the state, marking the first time a consortium of teams have worked together to compete with elite clubs on a national level while giving elite players throughout the state unprecedented opportunities for development and visibility, says Tomas Fox, director of coaching for Hoover Soccer Club and one of the visionaries behind Alabama Pride. Fox says that while the program is currently based in and

around Birmingham, the program's plan is to work with more clubs to the advantage of athletes from all corners of the state.

"It's the first time that we really truly have officially at least five clubs working together for the benefit of the players of the area," says Fox. "It's very important to see that for the first time we have, already have a group of five big clubs in Birmingham working together for the benefit of other players. That's something that is unbeatable. When you have five directors, five clubs, five staff members ready to start putting together and supporting the players in the state. It's something important for everybody.

"That's absolutely one of the things that brought this together as well, the opportunity to create satellites in the state for the benefit of those players that are in different areas that maybe aren't as crowded as Birmingham," adds Fox. "Now they have the opportunity to be seen by college coaches if that's what they want."



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Carlo Schiavoni, Tomas Fox, Luke Whittle, Jeremy McLane, Ryan Leib, Rocky Harmon, Mason Cook, AJ Adcock





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ALABAMA PRIDE THE FACTS

MISSION: The mission of the Pride is to change the competitive landscape of soccer for the elite player in the state by working together. We will provide the opportunity for top players to play with like-minded teammates...in short...more soccer for those who want more. We strive to provide exposure to college coaches at Showcases, quality coaching, and training/ playing with the top players in the state on a consistent basis.

COST: The cost for the program is \$400. This includes all tournament and coaching fees, registration, and referee fees. This does not include individual travel or uniform.

TRYOUTS: Tryouts will be mid-May. Specific times and locations are TBA. There is no fee to try out, but all players must pre-register online before the tryout.

TRAINING: Training will be held regularly on Wednesday nights throughout the summer, fall, and spring (U14 only). All five clubs' facilities will be used, and training will typically be from 6:30-8:30pm.

COACHING: Each team will have a head coach and an assistant coach. Top coaches from the participating clubs will be coaching the teams. A full staff slate will be available this spring, well in advance of tryouts.

ROSTER: Each team will have 20 rostered players; only 18 can participate in a match. Depending on tryouts, we may give the option to some players to join a training pool.

CALENDAR: Training starts June 7, and repeats every Wednesday until December 13. The NPL season runs August - November. Each team will also attend a number of Showcases throughout the year. A specific calendar for each team will be available on the website. U13 and U14 teams will participate in a spring season as well.

AFFILIATION: All players will be registered through US Club Soccer as members of Alabama Pride, and still be eligible to play ASA sanctioned leagues and state competitions.

GULF STATES PREMIER LEAGUE: Consisting of 11 clubs in 2016, this league features clubs from Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, and north Florida, which will minimize travel for Pride teams. More information can be found at www.nationalpremierleagues.com/gulf-states-premier-league

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AND ID2: The league hosts several "all-star" events, where invited players train and play in select events throughout the year. More information can be found on the website.

CONFLICTS WITH ASA CLUB SCHEDULE: All Region Premier League (RPL) and ASA League schedules will be synched to the Alabama Pride schedule to minimize most conflicts.

FINANCIAL AID: There is limited financial aid available. Applications will be available online. All players must purchase the uniform kit from Soccer Nation.

ELIGIBILITY: All players must live in Alabama, and cannot play on another US Club team concurrently.

COLLEGE CONNECTION: The Pride has recruited top college coaches who want to support the program — they will attend training sessions as guest clinicians and observe scrimmages and games to start their recruiting early. A complete list of our College Connection staff will be available this spring.

INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS: There will be five Alabama Pride Soccer informational meetings, one at each member club, scheduled for this spring to explain the program and answer any questions. With the exception of Trussville, all meetings will begin at 7:00 p.m.

Word of Alabama Pride has begun raising eyebrows throughout the state's soccer community despite the fact that tryouts aren't scheduled to begin until May. Fox says college coaches, for instance, are excited to see where the program's additional training and enhanced coaching will lead. In addition, Fox says, other clubs from around the state are already reaching out to the Pride leadership about jumping on board. "We're already having many conversations with college coaches who are very interested in the program. They are really interested in the fact that it's many clubs working together and trying to put together those players that are looking for more," says Fox. "It's very important to have those players in Alabama to be seen. To be given the opportunity to have exposure to college coaches is something that is a plus in the program."

For a player who makes an Alabama Pride roster, the commitments will not interrupt their regular club obligations. Selected players will still be eligible to play ASA with their parent club. Training will be held once a week on Wednesdays and game schedules will be coordinated among the five clubs to minimize conflicts and allow for the best soccer environment possible. Alabama Pride players will also be eligible to participate in the NPL fixtures and showcases. The Alabama Pride coaching staff, which will be announced later this spring, will be comprised of top local coaches from the participating clubs.

Additionally, Fox says, Alabama Pride is NOT recruiting players from other clubs, but rather is interested in working with clubs to expand the program's perks to more players. By working together and pooling resources, Alabama Pride will only help improve the skill level of Alabama players over the long run while minimizing disruptions to their club experience. "There is nothing better for our soccer players than to

have the opportunity to be coached by different, very quality coaches," says Fox.

"Alabama Pride is not replacing anything. It's in addition to what they already have. It's an opportunity for me to work with players that I only see on the other side of the field and vice-versa for the player," explains Fox. "Now they're going to have the opportunity to take advantage to be coached by another staff member from another club. Using each others' resources is one of the best things we can do for the players in this state."

Alabama Pride will compete in the NPL's Gulf States Premier League with elite teams from Louisiana, Georgia, Mississippi, and north Florida. The program also includes several soccer showcases, an incredible opportunity putting Alabama players in front of college coaches from around the country. "It's very, very competitive, and the kind of competition we want our top players to compete in," says Fox. "Then have the opportunity to expose them in college showcases is very, very good."

Alabama Pride tryouts will begin in May with trainings to begin on Wednesday, June 7, and continuing through mid-December. Alabama Pride Soccer will field boys and girls teams in the U13 (05) thru U19 (99) age groups. All interested players must register online for tryouts at alabamapridesoccer.com.



COACH LISA HARRELL

- 18+ years of coaching experience throughout the Southeast
- Former Div I collegiate soccer player
- Former North Carolina Jr. Olympic Development player
- Trained by US Team members Mia Hamm and Carla Overbeck.

"The game of soccer can impact a child's life by giving them the life skills and confidence in pursuing their dreams" - L. Harrell

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