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Butler sophomores Matt Hedges and Ben Kissick both got a jump on the soccer season this year playing for their club team Indy Burn in the U.S. Club National Championships last July.

Hedges and Kissick are members of the Butler men's soccer team, and both saw significant playing time on the squad last year, with Hedges starting in 20 matches and being named to the Horizon League All-Newcomer team. The duo both man the backfield for the Bulldogs, and in addition to playing for Butler, both played for the Indy Burn's Under-19 club team this past summer.

The Burn, based in Indianapolis, has players from around the state, including players from Indiana University and IUPUI.

After winning state five years in a row without qualifying for the national tournament, the Burn finally manages to capture Region II's bid to the national tournament.

"We had won state so many years but had never even advanced out of our bracket in Regionals before," Hedges, The Burn's captain, said. "So it was very satisfying to make it [to Nationals]."

The tournament, held just outside of Boston, takes one team from each of the four Regionals and plays them in a round-robin format.

The Indy Burn dropped their first match to the Colorado Rush, 1-0, and needed wins in the next two games in order to advance to the finals. The Burn looked solid throughout their match against Baltimore, leading 1-0 late in the game off of a penalty kick. But after giving up one goal in the 90-minute mark, The Burn looked ready to draw the match when the linesman appeared to signal for an offside call against Baltimore. But no call was actually made, and a Baltimore player who was clear of the field netted the winning goal just before time expired.

"[In] the first two games, we had better possession and outplayed the other teams but couldn't get any points," Hedges said.

The third game against NASA Elite was an even match that ended in a 0-0 draw, leaving the Burn with a 0-2-1 record and only one point.

NASA Elite and Baltimore, each with five points, advanced to the finals where Baltimore, who previously won the club championships in 2006, took home the crown.

Kissick and Hedges' focus now turns to the fall season with the Bulldogs. Butler kicked off play with a 2-0 win in its first exhibition match of the year over Dayton. Both players will be looked at to help the squad finish high in the conference and make the NCAA tournament.

Hedges said he hopes his experience with the club team will help him in the upcoming season.

"It's great preparation," Hedges said. "It keeps you fit and is one of a high level of competition."

Bringing back eight of last year's starters, including Hedges, the Bulldogs aim to build off last season's success as they battle with the Horizon League and other elite opponents.

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