

Indy Burn soccer team shoots for national title '90 Boys Premier Eagles reach nationals for 1st time

By Patrick Dorsey patrick.dorsey@indystar.com

For eight years, Isang Jacob headed a talented group of players at Pike Soccer Club. Sometimes his squad -- the Indy Burn '90 Boys Premier Eagles -- advanced pretty far in the U.S. Youth Soccer National Championship Series. But never this far. Last month the group won its first U.S. Youth Soccer regional championship. Next week, the team -- featuring former area high school players such as Brad Foulke and Sean McGrath (Pike), Tyler Keever (Cathedral), Adam Mills and Michael Whitman (Brebeuf Jesuit) and Joey Peglow (Lawrence Central) -- will compete in the 19-and-under National Championships in Lancaster, Mass. "Timing is everything," said Jacob, who also is in his first year as an assistant men's soccer coach at Penn State. "We've been good the past three years, and good enough to have won it, but the only explanation is we've come (up) short, and I don't think it was the (right) time. I just think that this is the time."

The quest begins Wednesday, when a round-robin schedule commences against the other three regional champions, teams from Colorado, Georgia and Maryland. With three points awarded per win and one for a tie, the two teams atop the standings after three games will meet July 26 for the national title. Jacob believes the Eagles can win the whole thing. His 19-player roster is filled with former prep-stars-turned-college players (Foulke plays at Rose-Hulman, Keever at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, McGrath at Notre Dame, Mills at West Virginia, Peglow at Kentucky and Whitman at Bellarmine in Louisville, Ky.). But despite the individual talent on the squad, there's little selfishness shown. "There's no individual on this team," Jacob said. "Each one in their own right is a superstar player, and collectively they've found a way to put that superstar (factor) aside and just jell as a team," said Pike Soccer Club Director Dan Kapsalis, who has helped train and coach the team this summer.

Success would be all but impossible without this attitude, especially since the players' college and summer commitments have kept them from playing together much recently. But since they mesh well and have been together so long -- some for all nine years with Jacob -- they're "kind of on autopilot" in terms of chemistry on the field, Kapsalis said. "We know each other. We know what everyone's thinking," said fifth-year Indy Burn defender Jonathon "Yogi" Snider, a Brownsburg graduate who now plays at IUPUI. "Quite honestly, we don't really have to practice with each other anymore. We've played with each other enough the past five, six, seven years that we know what we need to do, and we just go out there and do it." The skills they bring -- Kapsalis called them "extremely quick, extremely fast" and "not weak anywhere, absolutely nowhere" -- also help. So does the team's depth and flexibility. Jacob said his team can go 18 deep (without Foulke, who was injured in the regional), adding, "You can move guys around and still get the same result." In the end, Jacob and his players hope that result is a national title. "It's a collective of a group of guys (with a) common goal," he said, "just playing for the pride of Indiana, for the pride of the region, and for the pride of the club. "They want to leave a legacy here."

Reprinted by permission. To read the entire article visit www.indystar.com