

## **In Italy, Indy Burn proves it came to play**

Pike Soccer Club travel squad loses just 1 game and finishes 2nd in tournament, better than any U.S. team has ever done

Friday, April 20, 2007

By Chris Sims

[chris.sims@indystar.com](mailto:chris.sims@indystar.com)

Soccer in Italy can be summed up in a few words -- A.C. Milan, Ronaldo, the Indy Burn Eagles '90. That was the case April 1-9 when the Pike Soccer Club's Under-17 travel squad spent spring break competing in Italy. The Burn played two friendly matches and placed second in the four-game Como Lake Cup Tournament in Lake Como, Italy. The team's lone loss was a 1-0 contest against a U19 Switzerland squad. The Burn became the first U.S. squad to finish runner-up or champion since the tournament's inception. Burn coach Isang Jacob felt his squad had every chance for a tie or win against the Swiss team. The shots just weren't finding the back of the net. While being unbeaten would have been nice, winning games wasn't the main reason for the Burn's trip to Italy.

"My goal for these kids was the learning experience," Jacob said. "I wanted them to learn the different ways to play different systems and play the games differently, as well. The key is to broaden their experience. It was nice for them to see how they rank among players from other countries that are the same age and older." Last year, Jacob took his squad to the Liverpool Academy in England where it finished 0-2-1, despite being competitive in every game. The Burn's play was so good, in fact, that the other coaches suggested Jacob's team make the trip to Italy. The success in Italy has Jacob looking into a visit to Nigeria or South Africa next season.

"The gap is closer than we are given credit for," Jacob said. "Several of the coaches we played against said we are underrated, and the American gap is getting much closer." Jacob is preparing his kids for the next level. To play in Europe, he feels players need to know how youth players are performing around the world, which allows players to know they can play when they get there.

Reprinted by permission. To read the entire article visit [www.indystar.com](http://www.indystar.com)