

CUP White U16 Girls bring home the Vulcan Cup!

The CUP White U16 Girls braved the conditions in route to Birmingham, Alabama and the tournament championship at the Vulcan Cup (hosted by Birmingham United Soccer Club). With mother nature doing her best to side track the team, the families worked together to help insure that thirteen of the players were able to make the journey from snow-covered Ohio to sunny Alabama.

CUP White competed against Gulf Coast United Blue, from Clearwater, FL in their first match. Throughout the event they started matches well and this game was a good example. Monica Melink would get the team off to a flying start in the first 15 minutes, scoring a brilliant outside of the foot shot to the far post. CUP White's steady performance would continue in the second half as they consistently probed the Gulf Coast half looking for space to create their second and third goals. Sydnee Fields and Sam Arbutina would supply those goals, scoring on assists from Janelle Coates and Paula Savchenko. The back four, made up of Katie Lucas, Courtney Hoenicke, Carley Williams, Jenny Petree and Stephanie Gort, would maintain great concentration throughout the match, making it very difficult for GCUB to penetrate the final third.

In the second match, against Tennessee Futbol Club, CUP would continue their sharp, technical play. Lauryn Zielinski got the team into the scoring column with a composed finish barely 10 minutes into the match. Sam Arbutina would follow that up with a workmanlike goal, pouncing on a loose ball in the box to make it 2-0. CUP White would round out the scoring on a fantastic team goal. Some one and two-touch combination play would find the ball at Sam Arbutina's feet. Her crafty, lobbed pass would dispatch midfielder Abbie Schauble onto goal, who coolly finished the chance with a volley to the far post side-netting.

CUP White would play the Blount United Starz (TN) in their third match. Despite scoring early again in the first half, this game would prove to be much tighter than the previous two matches. Lauryn Zielinski scored from a Sydnee Fields assist and Katie Lucas would finish a great service from Jenny Petree to make it 2-0 at the half. The Starz came out strong in the second half and took advantage of one of the few lapses in concentration by CUP the entire tournament, making it 2-1 midway through the half. Although CUP White would create several more quality chances, the final score would stay 2-1, helping to advance CUP White to their first tournament final.

After a short rest, CUP White would play the Knoxville FC Mustangs in the championship game. Goalkeeper Mary Hyde was called on early and responded with a great save, redirecting a service deep into the box to eliminate the danger. Both teams created some good chances in the first half, but the score would remain 0-0 at the halftime interval. In the second half, CUP White's quality and fitness would take over. Monica Melink scored two tremendous goals from distance, with Paula Savchenko adding a third from a well struck half-volley. The overall discipline and concentration of the team was top-class. Captains Carley Williams and Courtney Hoenicke had the honor of presenting the team's first ever trophies at the ceremony. The fine performances throughout the weekend and the sunny weather left CUP White singing "Sweet Home Alabama" all the way home.