



Dear players, parents, and coaches,

The evolution of FC Coast Academy continues. As most of you know FC Coast was the vision of your fellow club Board and Coaching Directors to maximize our regions resources in an effort to both better compete on a state, regional, and national level as well as to hopefully represent our region in the USSF (United States Soccer Federation) Youth National Academy. Last year, for the first time, an organized academy was established by the leaders of each of our region's clubs (Myrtle Beach-Wilmington-Jacksonville) and it was endorsed with pledged support by UNCW's soccer programs and the Wilmington Hammerheads Professional Soccer Club.

A staff highlighting our regions most qualified coaches was formed and we were able to coax a highly qualified and seasoned coach away from the Dallas Texans to help galvanize the effort. In the spring of 2008 we had our 1st combined tryout at Olsen Fields and a summer training program was scripted to include both quality training and games.

While there were a few bumps in the road there were also a number of positives. First and for most, the pledged commitment of each club, as well as UNCW and the Hammerheads was untarnished. The summer program had to be modified more than once secondary to a number of unforeseeable issues and the flexibility and willingness to work together and make the best of whatever situation developed was exceptional. It should be noted that some of your Board of Directors subsidized the program with personal finances and all coaches received significantly less compensation for their time than what was promised...3 coaches agreed to no compensation which allowed us to keep our costs to the players extremely low. The opportunity to evaluate our regions talent pool was a part of the process, and I'm pleased to report that our players are showing promise and we think they will continue to thrive in an academy environment. The other very positive experience to both the players and the staff was the expanding relationship with the Wilmington Hammerheads. The use of Legion field and the locker rooms, as well as the opportunity to play before the pro games while wearing a Hammerhead uniform was thrilling for our boys, but with respect to our mission it helped shape the culture of our academy more than anything to date. Development of a "club culture" is one of the tenets the USSF is asking of all its constituents.

In the minds of the FC Coast Directors the idea of cultivating our relationship with the Hammerheads was the most logical progression of our collective offering to the community. After thoughtful discussion with Chuck Sullivan (owner of the Hammerheads) the FC Coast Board of Directors voted unanimously to include the Hammerheads on this year's application to the USSF Youth National Academy, and to work with the Hammerheads to further develop the youth academy under the umbrella of its professional organization. With this, the Hammerheads Youth Academy was born.

The current sentiment with respect to the USSF Youth National Academy is that we will not get in until they decide to expand the current regional divisions to 10 teams (there are 8 now). Speculation is that the Federation will continue the "grow slow" philosophy as they did last year and target certain areas of the country where they are not represented well. Despite this apparent reality of a delayed entrance into the Youth National Academy, the process of developing the Hammerheads Youth Academy continues and the current structure and plan is as follows.

For this year, the Hammerheads Youth Academy will consist of only three teams (boys) at the u-13, u-15, and u-17 age groups. This will be a summer / holiday tournament program that will coexist with each of



the player's representative club programs. The staff of the youth academy will include Chris Bagley player / assistant coach for the Hammerheads as well as a collective offering of our region's most qualified coaches. We have registered the Academy into the US Club Southeast Regional League and will be competing against clubs ranging from Florida to Maryland in the months of June, July, and the 1st weekend in August. The official schedule is to be released, but we will be competing in the *north division* and required to travel to three different game sites (Richmond, CASL, and Virginia Beach). There will be 3 games in Richmond the weekend of June 19-21, two games in Virginia Beach July 18th and 19th and one game @ CASL later in July. There will also be one "cross-over competition" in Raleigh where we will be matched up against two teams from the south division. This will occur the weekend of August 1st and 2nd. We will continue to try to have games at Legion Stadium before the pro team plays this summer, but we do not have any commitments to date. These games will hopefully be against other youth academies that are connected with other professional clubs.

Training will occur one night a week in Wilmington as well as another "local" training i.e. (with a designated lead trainer) Jacksonville players train in Jacksonville, Myrtle Beach players train in Myrtle Beach, etc.

A combined tryout for the Hammerhead Youth Academy will occur in Wilmington on **May 30th**. This will be @ Legion Stadium. The u-13 age group will start @ 1pm, the u-15 age group will start @ 2:30 pm, and the u-17 age group will start @ 4pm. The cost of participating in the tryout will be \$20 per player which will include admission into the professional game @ 7:00 pm (family pass) as well as food and refreshments after the tryout. If you are selected into the academy, you will be expected to attend the majority of the trainings and the scheduled competitions listed above. There will be a \$300 fee for the summer program which will include player registration fees, league registration fees, coaching fees, and the cost of your Hammerhead kit. This fee will not include travel costs to our scheduled competitions in Richmond, Virginia Beach, and Raleigh nor hotel costs.

Whitney Woods, Director of Operations for the Hammerheads will be assuming most of the administrative duties with the continued support from our Youth Academy Board of Directors. Information about the Hammerheads Youth Academy will be posted on the Hammerheads' website.

We would like to thank you for your continued support and hope you embrace this opportunity to represent our region in this exciting new program.

Sincerely,

The Hammerheads Youth Academy