

## 2009-2010 ECU Year End Review

As we approach the end of another ECU season, I'd like to reflect on how the year went. Overall, I believe ECU had an outstanding year.

It all begins with our coaches. Coach Phil has assembled an outstanding coaching staff that I believe is the most qualified, dedicated, and professional group of coaches in Northwest Florida. With good coaches, we attract and develop great players. This was evidenced by the surge of new players that joined the club in January and the success of our teams this Spring. We also added a Technical Trainer, who has been instrumental in improving the individual skills of our players.

Behind the scenes at ECU is a very dedicated Board of Directors. Although we only had four returning Board members this year, all the new members have hit the ground running and every one of them works tirelessly to promote and improve this club. The greatest asset of our Board members is they're not just looking out for their kids or a particular group of players—they're always looking out for the interests of all our players.

This year the Board has concentrated on three major goals:

1. Our budget tracking and dues collection process has been improved immensely. Next year, we hope to improve upon that further so we can invest in soccer goals, popup tents and other necessary equipment, and send our teams to worthwhile tournaments, while keeping our dues as low as possible.
2. Most successful select soccer clubs have some type of recreational soccer program as a "feeder" program to the select teams. We've investigated several options, including partnering with existing recreation programs and developing our own. There are still many details to iron out, but we hope to have a program in place by next Spring.
3. Field space is an ongoing problem. We have established a sub-committee consisting of current and former Board members to investigate developing a new soccer complex. This would include procuring land, obtaining grants, and everything associated with building and maintaining such a facility. In parallel to this effort, we have drafted a letter to City Council, to be signed by all the youth sports organizations in this area, asking for more lighted field space.

The club has had made several other improvements this year. Our Web site was completely rebuilt, adding much more flexibility to post, update, and distribute relevant information. We also established a method for processing credit card transactions through the Web site, making dues payment easier for our members.

Uniforms are now ordered online, giving members the flexibility to order uniforms on their own and reducing a lot of overhead/storage for the club. Look for spirit items to transition to a similar system next year.

We had several other unique opportunities drop in our laps, such as the Mia Hamm visit in February. An MLS Team approached us about affiliating with them and a professional women's soccer team

approached us about conducting Spring training in our area. We're still working with those organizations for possible affiliation in the future. We also had some sponsors, such as Academy Sports and Dr. Michelle VandenBosch approach us out of the blue, something we won't turn down!

The two tournaments ECU hosted were a huge success. The Destin Soccer Rodeo in the Fall was the largest ever and the Emerald Coast Cup was the second-largest, only because of limited field space. Like last year, we had to turn away teams, which means there's definitely room for growth. The amount of effort and volunteer hours that goes into these tournaments is incredible, but the income to the club and having a tournament in our own back yard makes it all worthwhile. Thank you again for your volunteerism.

ECU teams win tournaments nearly every weekend. This year we had some big wins at prominent tournaments such as the Raleigh College Shootout, Score at the Shore, and the Tiger Showcase. We had two teams win Region Cup and advance to Presidents Cup this year. Three teams participated in State Cup, with one of them advancing to the sweet 16. Both the boys and girls Daily News Players of the Year came from our club and two of our girls made the Florida 5A All-State teams. We had several players selected to the State ODP teams, but we need to continue to improve on that number. We have an ODP event planned in September and Coach Phil is working on some new programs to advance those who want to participate in ODP.

Looking forward, we have the upcoming tryouts and registration for the 2010-2011 season in June. FYSA is transitioning to a new registration process where parents will be responsible for registering their own children online. I'm sure there will be some growing pains, so be on the lookout for details and please bear with us as we all learn the new system. Also be on the lookout for the Annual General Membership (AGM) meeting in August when we elect the Board of Directors and approve our bylaws. We need maximum participation to kickoff a successful new season.

With a club this size, we can't make everyone happy all of the time. We would like to hear your suggestions at the AGM so we can continue to improve and make ECU the premier soccer club in Northwest Florida. I look forward to seeing you all at tryouts!

Mike Rarick  
ECU President