



Welcome!

Rush Union Update

As we head toward the end of the spring season, there is a strong sense of excitement across Rush Union. Many of our teams are preparing for and competing in end-of-season events, and it's great to see the continued progress and commitment from players and coaches alike. These final weeks provide valuable opportunities to compete, reflect, and finish the season on a high note.

On the girls' side, our DPL teams recently competed in the DPL Eastern Showcase in Richmond, Virginia, representing Rush Union at a high level against top competition from across the region. Experiences like these continue to play an important role in the development pathway for our players, providing exposure, challenge, and growth in competitive environments.

We also want to continue the conversation around the upcoming U.S. Soccer age group changes as part of Phase 2 of our communication plan. We have now held two Q&A sessions for families and shared a follow-up video to help provide additional clarity. In addition, we have created avenues for parents to provide individual feedback and connect directly with coaches. We remain committed to a transparent and thoughtful process as we prepare for implementation in Fall 2026. More information on the age group changes can be found here: [Resources](#)

Looking ahead, May is a key month for player identification and planning for next season. Our DPL and NAL ID Clinics will take place in early May, followed by tryouts in the third and fourth weeks of the month. Registration is now open, and we are expecting this to be the largest turnout for tryouts in our club's history. We are excited to see so many players continuing their journey within Rush Union. More information on tryouts can be found here: <https://www.rushunionsoccer.org/tryouts>

At the same time, summer program registration is open across all locations, with a wide variety of options available for players to stay active, continue developing, and remain connected to the game throughout the offseason. These programs are an important part of maintaining momentum and supporting long-term growth.

Our new community initiatives, "Get on the Bus" and "Just Ball," are set to launch later this spring and into the early summer. Both programs represent meaningful steps forward in expanding access to the game, connecting with local communities, and creating new opportunities for players of all backgrounds to engage with soccer in a fun and inclusive way.

We also recently held our Annual Meeting on April 29 via Zoom, our annual "State of the Union," where we shared updates across all areas of the club and outlined our vision moving forward. Thank you to everyone who joined and continues to stay engaged in the growth of Rush Union.

May 2026

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As we close out the season, we're looking forward to our second annual Rush Union Spring Recreational Cup on May 16–17. This event continues to grow and will be a great way to bring our recreational community together and celebrate the season. More information on our Recreational tournament can be found here: [Event Details - Rush Union Rec Cup](#)

This month also featured an article in the Milton Neighbor that focused on the broader need to refocus the youth soccer landscape. The piece highlighted important conversations around player development, access, and long-term sustainability in the game, and we're proud to contribute to that dialogue as part of our ongoing work within the community.

Separately, we are honored to have been recognized by the Aspen Sports Institute as a recipient of the Project Play Champion award. This recognition reflects the work being done across Rush Union to create access, opportunity, and positive experiences for players and families, and reinforces our commitment to growing the game in the right way. More information can be found here: [Project Play Champions powered by Nickelodeon Our World - Project Play](#)

Thank you for your continued support throughout the spring season. We're excited to finish strong and look forward to everything that lies ahead this summer.

Thank you for being part of our Rush Union family. We look forward to seeing you on the field soon.

R|U Ready?



Neil McNab Jr.
CEO Rush Union



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May 2026

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**Annual Club Meeting
April 29, 2026.**

PRESENTED BY



NEIL MCNAB
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thank you to all those who were able to attend our annual meeting. The meeting was recorded for those who missed. We would also like to ask everyone to take a few minutes to complete the survey below.

Share Link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/9FbAMJ1UzblgRypdC9Gxrua70iO83WvknTXx9ema_3Rz_L1ThuQMB4YXFXmliAjv.NeiQiZUJi0zMDAiy

Passcode: =0D.y7+c

We value your feedback and insight to help us improve our programming and your experience. Please take a few minutes to complete our Parent Survey using the link below.

Deadline for responses is May 8.

<https://forms.gle/kzxUSHM5eUJpEbED6>

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We are excited to join the [National Academy League](#) (NAL) for the Fall 2026-Spring 2027 Seasons.



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Congratulations on our DPL G2013 & G2012 teams who represent Rush Union at the DPL Eastern Showcase in Richmond VA, great job girls!

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SPORTS

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EXPERT CONTRIBUTOR

COACHING THE 80%: RETHINKING WHERE WE INVEST IN YOUTH SOCCER



BY NEIL MCNAB,
RUSH UNION SOCCER

Youth soccer does not have a participation problem. It does not lack passion, energy, or even resources. What it has quietly and consistently is a prioritization problem.

Across the landscape, we tend to concentrate our best environments, our most experienced coaches, and our greatest attention on a relatively small percentage of players. These are the players identified early, placed on top teams, and given access to the most visible pathways. This approach is often framed as development, and in many ways, it is. But it also reveals something deeper about how the system is designed.

It raises a simple but important question: who is youth soccer really built for?

The majority of players exist outside of that top tier. They are not always the first selected or the most obvious. Some develop later. Some balance multiple sports or interests. Many simply love the game without defining themselves by it. They represent the largest share of participants, and yet their experience often feels less intentional. Training environments can be inconsistent, coaching quality uneven, and competition structures unclear or disconnected. Not by design, but by default.

Over time, that lack of intentionality has consequences. Players do not always leave the game because they stop loving it. More often, they leave because the experience stops meeting them where they are. When the environment lacks purpose or progression, engagement fades. At the same time, early concentration of resources narrows the overall talent pool. The game has never been particularly good at predicting who will succeed later, and yet many systems still behave as if it can.

This is not a criticism of ambition or high performance. Those pathways matter, and they should. But they cannot be the only measure of success. If the game is to be healthy long term, success has to be understood more broadly. It has to include how many players are still playing at eighteen, how many remain connected to the game as adults, and how many find a place in soccer beyond their playing years. It has to reflect how accessible and relevant the experience is across different communities and different types of players.

That shift begins with how we think about influence. For all the conversation around player pathways, there is often less discussion about where coaching impact is most needed. The assumption has long been that the best coaches should work with the best players. There

is logic in that, but it is not the only way to think about development. If more players were exposed to high-quality coaching earlier and more consistently, the overall experience would change. Environments would become more engaging, standards would rise across the board, and more players would find reasons to stay in the game longer.

Improving access, then, is not just about cost. It is about design. It is about creating environments that feel purposeful, connected, and adaptable to the realities of players' lives. It is about offering meaningful competition, flexible participation, and visible ways to progress, even outside traditional definitions of "elite." When done well, these are not compromises. They are enhancements that strengthen the entire system.

Youth soccer sits in a unique space between sport, education, and community. That position brings with it a broader responsibility. Not simply to identify and advance the few, but to serve the many in a way that reflects the value the game can bring over a lifetime. The players who reach the highest levels will always be important. But so too are the ones who stay connected, who come back as coaches, who support the game as parents, and who carry it into their communities.

SUMMER PROGRAMS

MILTON AND DEKALB LOCATIONS

RUSH UNION SOCCER

- SCCL Competitive • Recreational • All Ages
- NEW INDOOR TURF IN MILTON! • Adult Leagues
- College ID Opportunities • Local/Regional Tournament Play

SCCL

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12 • OUR MILTON NEIGHBOR

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They are not separate from the system. They are what sustain it.

There is, however, a growing recognition that this balance can be better. Across clubs, leagues, and organizations, there are conversations beginning to shift. There is a willingness to question long-held assumptions and to explore new ways of structuring programs, sharing resources, and aligning priorities. No single organization will solve this alone, and it is not a challenge that sits neatly within one league, one club, or one level of the game.

But that is also where the opportunity lies.

If the next phase of youth soccer is going to better serve the 80 percent, it will come through greater collaboration across organizational boundaries. It will come from a shared understanding that improving the experience for the majority strengthens the game for everyone. It will come from aligning not just on competition, but on purpose.

The solutions are not theoretical. They are already starting to take shape in different forms, in different places. The task now is to connect them, to support them, and to scale them with intention.

Because in the end, the future of the game will not be defined by how well we serve the few.

It will be defined by how deliberately we choose to serve them all.

SENIOR SPOTLIGHTS

Milton High School Baseball Class of 2026:

Photo by Nancy Daniels
Jackson Haug, Cooper Childress, Miller Pierce, Jude Green, Brady Schriver, Jackson Collins, Jesse Smalley, Davis Nichols, Weston Blevins, *Not pictured: Ellery Smith, Team Manager



Milton High School Lady Eagles Softball Fast Pitch Class of 2026:

Photo by: Andrea Rountree
Millie Morris, Elizabeth Wilkes, Amelia Wilkes, Addison Daily



Milton High School Track & Field Class of 2026:

Photo Submitted by Coach Tama
Featured Athlete Record holder
Alana Calhoun



Track Seniors: Kelsey Anderson, Jayin Batra, Madison Bradway, Alana Calhoun, Ronan Crupi, Keira Dennison, Hughan Frederick, Ryan Greathouse, Beck Hamilton, Braxton Herndon, Alliyah Holmes, Elliot Johnson, Jackson Kaul, Everett Lawder, Jonathan Lynch, Keljen McCants, Gabrielle Michel, Jady Sevel, Caroline Spain, Masiah Wall

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Please send any pictures, videos, and everything you captured during games and practices to help us promote better.

RCRUZ@RUSHUNIONSOCCKER.ORG

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May 2026

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check out our website for more information.*



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WORLD CUP 2026 ACTIVATIONS

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World Cup 2026 Activation

WORLD CUP ENGAGEMENT & ACTIVATION PLANS

“Together we thrive — Milton Celebrates the World Cup”
“Serve the Community!”



“Play It Forward — Dunwoody Celebrates the World Cup”
“Connecting the Community!”



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Rush Union is aware of the upcoming age groups changes and is working with Rush National and our governing bodies to make sure we are informed and update our membership. More information will be made available this spring season.

To watch a short update video and access other resources we created so far please click here:
[Age Group Change Information | Rush Union Soccer](#)

NEW AGE GROUPS

STARTING IN THE 2026–2027 SEASON

- AGE GROUPS WILL BE DEFINED BY A SEASONAL MODEL, WHICH RANGES FROM AUGUST 1ST – JULY 31ST OF THE FOLLOWING YEAR.
- NEW SEASONAL MODEL ALIGNS PLAYERS WITH PEERS OF SIMILAR SCHOOL-GRADE AGE.
- PREVIOUS FORMAT: JANUARY 1ST – DECEMBER 31ST

*THESE CHANGES WILL BE IMPLEMENTED ACROSS THE ENTIRE YOUTH SOCCER LANDSCAPE, FOR ALL CLUBS.



2026–2027 SEASON

U-8	BORN AUG. 1ST 2018 – JULY 31ST 2019
U-9	BORN AUG. 1ST 2017 – JULY 31ST 2018
U-10	BORN AUG. 1ST 2016 – JULY 31ST 2017
U-11	BORN AUG. 1ST 2015 – JULY 31ST 2016
U-12	BORN AUG. 1ST 2014 – JULY 31ST 2015
U-13	BORN AUG. 1ST 2013 – JULY 31ST 2014
U-14	BORN AUG. 1ST 2012 – JULY 31ST 2013
U-15	BORN AUG. 1ST 2011 – JULY 31ST 2012
U-16	BORN AUG. 1ST 2010 – JULY 31ST 2011
U-17	BORN AUG. 1ST 2009 – JULY 31ST 2010
U-18	BORN AUG. 1ST 2008 – JULY 31ST 2009
U-19	BORN AUG. 1ST 2007 – JULY 31ST 2008



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Want to help our Rush Union community continue to grow and thrive? Become a sponsor or share with your fellow community members and let's grow together!

Rush Union Sponsorship Opportunities



Rush Union provides opportunities to **ALL** players, strengthens **existing** teams, provides **exceptional** coaching, and a stable club in your neighborhood.

And in these times, staying close to home is so important. **We are better together.** And together we are Rush Union. **RIU in?**



Benefits of Sponsorship

- Connect with 4,000 families over 3 prime locations (Rec, Pre-Academy, Academy, Select, and Adult Teams)
- Get in front of 22,000 Rush Cup participants annually
- 4 Adult Leagues annually with 350 participants.
- Increased brand awareness
- Increased digital exposure
- Enhanced community pride
- Partner Community Network
- Opportunities to stay in front of families during Summer and Winter camps

Choose the level that fits your goals:



Contact for more information:
Kom Momeni (678) 787-3051
Neil McNab (404) 386-4131

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Atlanta, GA 31141
<https://www.rushunionsoccer.org/>

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**DUNWOODY
LOCATION**

JACK MAHER
jmaher@rushunionsoccer.org

**MILTON
LOCATION**

CHRIS PANAYIOTOU
cpanayiotou@rushunionsoccer.org

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