



Soccer Hempen's Buffs to host national soccer teams

CU will play, train with U.S., Canadian squads

By Joshua Lindenstien

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When Colorado soccer coach Bill Hempen was chatting with United States women's U20 national team counterpart Jill Ellis a couple of years ago, he suggested that Ellis bring the squad to Boulder for some high-altitude training.

The only thing was, Boulder's mere 5,430 feet of elevation still sat well below that of Puebla, Mexico's 7,136, at which the Americans had to play in a U20 World Cup qualifier last summer. So Hempen's offer was shelved and the squad went elsewhere to train.

Ellis, also the coach at UCLA, didn't forget about Boulder though.

Now preparing her group for the 2010 U20 World Cup in Germany, she and the squad are coming to Boulder this month for a week of training on the CU campus, and they're bringing a few friends along with them. Canada's U20 team and the U.S. U18 team will also come to Boulder to train and play exhibition matches against one another.

"It all started with (the U.S. U20 team), and then these other two programs jumped on," Hempen said Wednesday. "It just kind of evolved into three teams training here."

All three teams will stay at the Millenium Harvest House hotel near campus and practice at Prentup Field. The Canadians arrive first, on Sunday, while the U18 Americans come on July 9 and the U20 Americans get here July 11.

Canada will face the U18 Americans at 5 p.m. July 12 at Prentup, the U20 Americans at 5 p.m. July 14 and then the U20 Americans again at 10 a.m. July 16. Hempen said he anticipates that the games will be open to the public, though details such as admission haven't yet been worked out.

With the U.S. men's national team's recent upset victory over Spain giving soccer a boost in buzz in America, Hempen couldn't have picked a better time for his program to gain some added exposure.

CU star Nikki Marshall, who will be a senior in the fall, played for Ellis last fall when the American U20s won the 2008 World Cup in Chile, though she won't be training with the group this week because she's moved up to the U23 ranks.

Still, having 60 or so of the best young players in North America on campus should provide plenty of interest for local soccer fans and a nice shot of visibility for the Buffs' program.

“It’s just more awareness for Boulder and for CU in my mind,” said Hempen, who will serve as an assistant coach for the U18 squad at the camp. “I’m pretty excited about it.”



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