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 July 14-19, 2009 • DISNEYCUPSOCCKER.COM



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2009 Best Boys Clubs

by Paul Kennedy, Wednesday, Jan 28, 2009 7:00 AM ET

For the first time since Soccer America began its annual rankings of the Best Boys Clubs in 2004, the Baltimore Bays are No. 1, edging last year's top-ranked club, the Dallas Texans. For Soccer America's Top 30 Boys Clubs ...



John Dorton/isiphotos.com

Soccer America's Top 30 Boys Clubs

1. Baltimore Bays
2. Dallas Texans
3. Andromeda
4. Arsenal FC
5. Chicago Magic
6. Real So Cal
7. FC Delco
8. Solar FC
9. Michigan Wolves
10. Schulz Soccer Academy
11. CASL
12. LAFC
13. PDA
14. Concorde Elite
15. Chicago Fire
16. FC Milwaukee
17. Javanon SC
18. Real Colorado
19. Carmel United
20. West Coast FC
21. Sockers FC
22. NJSA 04
23. Columbus Crew
24. Vardar SC
25. St. Louis Scott Gallagher

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- 26. Blau Weiss Gottschee
- 27. Bethesda SC
- 28. Colorado Rush
- 29. D.C. United
- 30. Kansas City Wizards

Criteria

Soccer America selects the top 30 clubs based on success of their teams in national youth championships over the last three years and national recognition for players from these clubs in 2008.

1 Baltimore Bays. The Casa Mia Bays have won U.S. Youth Soccer national championships in each of the last three years. In addition, the Baltimore Bays won the inaugural U.S. Soccer Development Academy championship in the U-17/18 age group with a dramatic overtime win. Chris Agorsor, now at Virginia, was named the U-17/18 Player of the Year, and teammate Andrew Bullis won Academy Goal of the Year. The Bays had teams in each of the 2008 U-13 to U-15 Maryland state finals, so there's more talent on the way.

2 Dallas Texans. The Texans kept up their record of having won a U.S. Youth Soccer national championship in each of the last four years when they captured the U-16 national championship only months after winning the inaugural U.S. Youth Soccer National League title in the same age category. The depth of the wide-ranging Texans program was evident at the Disney's Soccer Showcase, where three Texans teams were crowned champions and 11 teams competed in placement games.

3 Andromeda. The Plano-based club became only the third club - after FC Delco in 2001 and the Dallas Texans in 2005 - to win two U.S. Youth Soccer national championships in the same year when they won the 2008 U-17 and U-18 titles. For the U-18s, it was the second year in a row they won their age group. Like the Texans, Andromeda is competing this season in the Development Academy's new Texas division.

4 Arsenal FC. The Alta Loma, Calif., club celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2008. Its best finish at the National Championships was second in the U-14 division, but it marked the fifth straight year it had at least one team reach the final. Arsenal (with no direct affiliation to the English club of the same name) finished second in its U-17/18 division in the Development Academy.

5 Chicago Magic. For the first time in more than a decade, the Magic didn't win a regional title in an age group that now sends its winner to the National Championships. Still, it was a good year for the Magic. It finished fifth in the U-15/16 age group at the Development Academy's Finals Week. It topped the annual Super Y-League "First 11" Rankings.

6 Real So Cal. The Southern California powerhouse is one of only three teams to win three straight U.S. Youth Soccer national titles (2005-07 in U-14s to U-16s). Its best performance in 2008 was a second-place finish in the U-16 division.

7 FC Delco. Although it has not won a title since 2003, Delco's seven U.S. Youth Soccer national boys championships put the Pennsylvania club first in the nation. Delco has sent six teams to the National Championships in the last six years. The U-16 Galaxy is unbeaten after the first series of the 2008-09 USYS National League.

8 Solar FC. After coming up short in three previous appearances at the National Championships, Solar's '90 team got one last crack in 2008 and won the Texas club's first national title, capturing the big one, the McGuire Cup. Coach Kevin Smith earned NSCAA/adidas Youth Boys Coach of the Year.

Rising Stars

Alfred Koroma first made a name for himself at the age of 11 when he played as a guest player in a Dallas Cup under-16 division. Now 15, he was the youngest player in the U.S. U-17 residency program last fall.

9 Michigan Wolves. From a YMCA program in Livonia has developed one of the Midwest's best programs (the girls play under the name of the Hawks). The boys won their third U.S. Youth Soccer national title in 2007 and they finished second in their U-17/18 division in the inaugural Development Academy. The academy program has partnered with English club Derby County and its teams play as Derby County Wolves.

10 Schulz Soccer Academy. The South Florida academy, founded by Josef Schulz, a former Austrian pro, has tapped into the local talent pool to develop some of the nation's top young products, most notably Jozy Altidore. Schulz had three players in U-17 residency - Donovan Henry, Stefan Jerome and Zachary Herold - more than any other team in the country.

11 CASL. The Capital Area Soccer League in North Carolina is one of the most innovative programs in the country, combining a huge recreation program and a competitive arm whose academy program is supported by English club Chelsea. Both Development Academy teams won their divisions with combined records of 43-7-9 in 2008.

12 LAFC. Like CASL, Los Angeles FC swept both Development Academy divisions - the U-17/18s finished second and the U/15-16s were sixth at the championships - and has partnered with Chelsea. The coaching staff is headed by former MLS pros Dan Calichman and Ted Chronopoulos.

13 PDA. Since being formed a decade ago, PDA has been a force on the New Jersey scene. It was an immediate success in the Development Academy program, sending its U/15-16 team to the championship game.

14 Concorde Elite. A fifth-place finish during the Development Academy's Finals Week (U-15/16) is a testament to the Georgia club's strength. Three current or former Concorde players were picked for January's U.S. U-18 mega-camp.

15 Chicago Fire. The Fire achieved the highest ranking an MLS club has ever achieved in our rankings. Its academy team was sixth in the Development Academy U-17/18 age group and the U-15 team from its Juniors program went 1-1-1 at the National Championships.

Rising Stars

Victor Pineda, 15, became the first player from the Fire's academy and juniors program to join the U-17 residency program. He moved to Bradenton last fall following a stint with the U-17s on their summer tour of Central America.

16 FC Milwaukee. Five FC Milwaukee teams have reached at least as far as the Region II final in the last three years. Eight academy players won 2008 all-state prep honors (first or second team).

17 Javanon SC. The only Kentucky to win a U.S. Youth Soccer national championship - in 1996 and 2007 - Javanon won four boys state titles and its U-16s went on to the nationals in 2008.

Did you know?

Javanon is a Farsi word meaning "youth." Iranian-born Ali Ahmadi began Javanon Soccer Club in 1989 when the indoor Louisville Thunder of which he was director of operations folded. Ahmadi formed a team of young boys he has been coaching at the Thunder's training facility.

18 Real Colorado. Based in one of the fastest-growing counties in the country, Real Colorado rocketed to the top of the Development Academy with first- and second-place finishes in the West division.

19 Carmel United. The Indiana club won the Development Academy's U-15/16 age group with a 1-0 win over PDA in last summer's final, the first major boys title for a club best known previously for the girls program.

20 West Coast FC. West Coast was alone among Southern California clubs with two players in U-17 residency last fall: midfielder Jonathan Canales and forward Jaime Gutierrez. More prospects are on the horizon. West Coast's U-13s are one of the nation's up-and-coming teams.

21 Sockers FC. Few clubs can match the Illinois club's record of producing five U.S. internationals - Michael Bradley, Jay DeMerit, Mike Magee, Bryan Namoff and Jonathan Spector. A name for the future: Michael Chang, who showed lots of promise at last summer's U-14 national camp.

22 NJSA 04. Tab Ramos and Rob Johnson, former MetroStar teammates, started NJSA 04 five years ago and had their first big success when the Gunners won the 2008 U-14 U.S. Youth Soccer national championship.

Rising Stars

Ross Tetro, who has showed off his ball skills in stints at various under-14 national camps, helped NJSA's Gunners capture the first U.S. Youth Soccer boys championship for a New Jersey team in two decades.

23 Columbus Crew. The Crew's academy teams have quickly become a force on the competitive Ohio youth scene. The Crew finished third in the U-17/18 age group at the Development Academy Finals Week. Crew players Chad Barson, Justin Luthy and Ben Speas are among the top players in this year's senior class.

24 Vardar SC. The Detroit area club, which has expanded to include five clubs across Michigan and another in Missouri, has been one the nation's top clubs for more than a two decades with the three stars on its jersey representing the three U.S. Youth Soccer national titles to its credit. Vardar's Soony Saad was named the 2008 U-15/16 Academy Player of the Year and earned a spot in the U-17 residency program last fall.

25 St. Louis Scott Gallagher. In the competitive Missouri state championships, Scott Gallagher stood out, claiming five titles in the older age groups. With the merger of Gallagher, St. Louis SC and two other clubs, it has two teams - Missouri and Metro (formerly Metro United) - in the Development Academy.

26 Blau Weiss Gottschee. The New York club, whose youth program produced Arnie Mausser and Michael Windischmann, had two second-place finishes in the Development Academy's Northeast Division.

Did you know?

Blau Weiss Gottschee is the oldest club in Soccer America's Best Clubs rankings. It was founded in 1951 by Gottscheers, immigrants of German descent from Slovenia who were forced to flee during World War II, moved to Austria and resettled in Queens, New York.

27 Bethesda SC. The Maryland club, launched in 1979, has been in the Soccer America boys rankings five out of six years. The program's top young player is goalie Samir Badr, who has been in U-17 residency.

28 Colorado Rush. The Rush's older teams had solid seasons, finishing in the top four nationally in the U.S. Youth Soccer's U-19 age group and the Development Academy's U-17/18 age group.

29 D.C. United. United was one of the first MLS clubs to enter the youth game and has quickly tapped into the diverse Maryland-Virginia soccer market. Julio Arjona and Shaquille Phillips both spent last fall at the U-17 residency program in Bradenton.

30 Kansas City Wizards. The Juniors U-19 team made an impressive run to the U.S. Youth Soccer national championship game. The Wizards will join the Development Academy next season.