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Holmdel team wins Stallions' first state cup

BY WARREN RAPPLEYEA Staff Writer

The NJX Xtreme boys U11 soccer team completed its fall season with a convincing run through the New Jersey Youth Soccer State Cup tournament.

Coach Rich Pekmezian noted that the NJX Xtreme is part of Holmdel Stallions Soccer Club team and the title is the first state cup won by a team in the Stallions organization, which was founded in 1993.

NJX stands for New Jersey Soccer Excellence and is the advanced division of the Stallions club, which formed the division last year. Many of the players on Pekmezian's team have been playing together for the past five years.

In State Cup play, NJX Xtreme was dominant. They opened the 64-team tourney with a 6-0 success against Princeton FC Liverpool and followed up with a 6-1 victory against Arsenal Stampede, allowing the lone goal opponents would get in the tournament.

Next up was a 3-0 triumph over Marlboro that propelled NJX Xtreme into the quarterfinals, where they came away with a 3-0 win over Morris United/STA. In the semifinal, the local boys earned a 5-0 victory against SSC Falcons, which set up a meeting with Den of Lions Academy in the finale. NJX Xtreme concluded its roll with a 3-0 win.

"This really was a true team effort," said Pekmezian, who played while at Rutgers and is the former varsity coach at Middletown High School North. "I've coach a lot of these boys since they were 6 years old, and to see how far they've come and how they cover for each other, it really made me proud of them all."

During the regular season, NJX Xtreme plays in the Mid Atlantic Premier Soccer League's (MAPS) top flight, or most competitive division, where Pekmezian's team has been at or near the top of the league tables each of the past four seasons.

In addition, NJX Xtreme competed as a U10 team last fall in the U11 State Cup U.S. Club Soccer tournament and

made its way all the way to the finals before falling.

Pekmezian explained that the premise for NJX Xtreme is to train youth soccer players to play at a higher level, while ensuring that all members of the team see significant playing time. He noted that the Xtreme roster includes 14 players, and 11 players are on the field at any one time.

"Playing time is essential for development and fun," said Pekmezian. "We're very proud of our roster stability. These kids have developed as a group, and it shows on the field. They know where to be and when to be there."

The members of the NJX Xtreme are: Andrew Aprahamian, Patrick Gates, Brandon Golden, Weston Maki, Matt Mawson, Ryan O'Connor, D.J. Palmer, Paul Ramsey, Chris Reale, Mason Remondelli, Zach Riviere, Julian Stifano, Matt Thorsheim and Brendan Wall.

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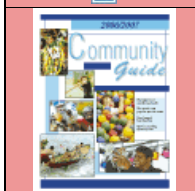
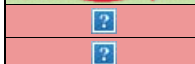
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