



CHICAGO FIRE NEWS RELEASE

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Chicago Fire Youth Development Program Update

**Chicago Fire Juniors Alums Help Wheaton College Reach Men's and Women's Div. III Finals
West Michigan U18, U15 Girls Win Tournaments; U15, U17 Boys Join Midwest Regional League
Six Fire Juniors—Elm Grove Players Receive High School All-Conference Awards
CFJ—Mississippi U15 Boys White Qualify for Region III Championships**

BRIDGEVIEW, IL (Friday, December 15, 2006) – Chicago Fire Soccer's youth development program rolls into December with tidings of team successes from across the country. Locally, four alumni of the Chicago Fire Juniors helped Wheaton College reach both the Men's and Women's NCAA Division III National Championships in Florida over Thanksgiving weekend. The CFJ – West Michigan recently saw its U18 and U15 Girls teams win in recent regional showcase tournaments, while its U15 and U17 Boys sides have been selected to compete in the competitive US Youth Soccer Midwest Regional League. Six boys players from the CFJ – Elm Grove (Wis.) reaped rewards for their hard work during the recently-ended high school season, while the Fire Juniors – Mississippi saw its U15 Boys clinch a spot in the 2007 US Youth Soccer Region III Championships.

Chicago Fire Juniors

• **Ex-Fire Juniors Standout Bethany Barton leads Wheaton College Women's Squad to NCAA Division III Title**
The Wheaton College Thunder women's soccer team captured its second NCAA Division III title in three years thanks in large part to defender and former Fire Juniors player Bethany Barton, whose staunch defense and leadership helped the Thunder to a 2-0 victory over the College of New Jersey in the championship game on Nov. 25 in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. Barton's effort in the back helped Wheaton to shutout wins in all six of their tournament games and garnered the junior co-captain the tournament's Defensive MVP honor along with a spot on the All-Tournament Team. In addition, Barton – who clinched Wheaton's 2004 title by converting the decisive penalty kick – was also voted First Team All-American by D3Kicks.com (a website dedicated to Division 3 soccer and its athletes) and Second Team All-American by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA). Barton and the rest of the Thunder's championship-winning squad will be featured in an NCAA Fall Sports Championships special that will air on CBS Sports on Saturday, Dec. 30 at 12:00 p.m. CST.

• **Three Fire Juniors Alums Lead Wheaton Men to Division III Championship Game**
The Wheaton College men's soccer team nearly pulled off a double for the program, but after a miraculous finish to the season the Thunder would fall short in the NCAA Division III Men's National Championship, losing 3-0 to Messiah College of Pennsylvania on Nov. 25 in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. Three former Chicago Fire Juniors players – freshman midfielder Jason VanderVeen, junior forward Strider Ellass and sophomore forward Steve Poppe – were all part of the Thunder squad that nearly gave legendary Wheaton Coach Joe Bean his third championship in his 45th and final season as a collegiate soccer coach, the last 38 of which were spent at the helm of the Thunder. The ex-Fire Juniors trio was part of a Wheaton squad that finished the 2006 season with a 17-8-4.

Chicago Fire Juniors – Mississippi

• **U15 Boys White Win Central Division, Clinch Spot in 2007 Regional Championships**
Congratulations to the Chicago Fire Juniors – Mississippi U15 Boys White team, coached by Casey Chiasson, on winning the Region III Premier League Central Division for the second consecutive year. The U15's have compiled a record of 7-0-1 and clinched the title with one game remaining. During their run to the championship the squad tied CSC Santos 2-2, defeated Lafreniere 5-2, and proceeded to win their remaining games by defeating the Jets from Birmingham 2 – 1, HSC Strikers Blue 1-0, MSC United 2-1, Little Rock FC 7-1, Express 2-0 and the Tennessee Rush Nike 3-1. As a reward for their successful season, the CFJ – Mississippi U15s have earned a spot in the 2007 US Youth Soccer Region III Championships, being held June 28–July 4, 2007 in Oklahoma City, Okla.

• **U17 Boys White Take First in Germantown Fury Invitational Soccer Tournament**
The Fire Juniors – Mississippi U17 Boys, coached by Kenny White and Chad Hampton, posted a 3-1 win over the MYSA 90 Blue (Madison, Wis.) to claim first place in the GIT Invitational Men's College Showcase, held Dec. 2-3 in Memphis, Tenn. In earlier bracket play, the U17s defeated both the Memphis (Tenn.) Fury 90 Premier 4-0 and Mockingbird White (Louisville, Ky.) 2-0, and tied the Blast Express (Columbus, Ohio) 1-1.

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Chicago Fire Juniors – West Michigan

• ***Both U18 and U15 Girls Take Home Top Tournament Honors***

In a fitting end to another great season for Fire Juniors – West Michigan, two teams finished their seasons by placing first in tournament play over the weekend of Nov. 10-12. The U18 Girls, coached by Jeff Merritt, won the Veterans Invitational Tournament in Evansville, Ind., the squad first drawing with fellow Michigan-based side LSC United (Livonia, Mich.) 0-0 before beating BFC–Reade (Alton, Ill.) 2-0 to set up another meeting against LSC United in a final that saw the U18s come away 2-1 victors.

During the same weekend, the Fire Juniors – West Michigan U15 Girls, coached by Ian McMahon, won the MC United College Showcase Shootout in St. Louis. The U15s only conceded one goal during the tournament in four games, that coming in a close 1-0 loss to Iowa Soccer Club (Iowa City, Iowa). The U15 Girls bounced back with a 2-0 win over tournament host MC United and a 5-0 crushing of Vardar SC of St. Louis to set up a rematch in the final against Iowa Soccer Club. This time the U15s turned the tables, coming out on the winning end of a 1-0 result to take the tourney that was attended by scouts from nearly 60 colleges and universities.

• ***U15 and U17 Boys First to Compete in the US Youth Soccer Region II Midwest Regional League***

In another first for the West Michigan satellite club, two teams have been selected to participate in the US Youth Soccer Region II Midwest Regional League for the Spring 2007 season. The club will be represented by the U15 boys team coached by Ian McMahon and the U17 Boys coached by Cliff Wegner. The U15 squad will compete in the Under 15 First Division East Blue, where it will face Internationals (OH), Everest (OH), Pacesetter 91-92 Premier (OH), Blast FC (OH), COSA Express (OH), Team Ohio (OH), Fever Academy 92 (IN), Indy Burn 92 (IN), and TNT Dynamite (MI). The U17s will play in the Under 17 First Division East Blue, taking on Vardarstars–Davis (MI), Ann Arbor Arsenal Blue (MI), Bloomfield Force (MI), Fort Wayne Fever Academy (IN), Pacesetter 89-90 Boys (OH), Worthington United Blue (OH), and Blast FC (OH).

• ***New Contact Information Reminder***

The new address and contact information for the Chicago Fire Juniors – West Michigan is:

West Michigan Fire Juniors

216 N. 120th Avenue

Holland, MI 49424

Phone: 616-393-0888 Fax: 616-393-0889

Chicago Fire Juniors – Elm Grove

• ***Six Elm Grove Players Named to Greater Metro Conference All-Conference Team***

Six Chicago Fire Juniors – Elm Grove players earned recognition in November by being named to the Greater Metro Conference All-Conference team following the Wisconsin fall high school season. Coaches from the (Milwaukee) Greater Metro Conference voted the six high school seniors for their top award, recognized by the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel. The players are awarded a plaque for their achievements at each player's respective school banquet. The six All-Conference selections are Dan Froelich (Brookfield Central HS), Joe Watson, Phil Carson, John Glapa and Jon Hegwood (Brookfield East HS), and Mike Eastman (Menomonee Falls HS).

• ***U12 Boys Continue Success in Premier Indoor League***

Midway through the season, the Chicago Fire Juniors – Elm Grove U12 Boys have a solid hold of first place in the U12 Boys Premier Indoor League with a record of 5-0-0, outscoring their opponents 39-8 at the Brookfield Indoor Complex. Since league play began on Oct. 23, the U12s have gone on to defeat SC Waukesha, United FC Red, Lake Country United, FC Milwaukee, Tosa Pumas, and Milwaukee Sport Club up to the season's midway point.

www.ChicagoFireJuniors.com www.WestMichiganFire.com www.MississippiFireJR.com www.elmgrovesoccer.com

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