

MILLBURN MAGIC

Press Release



WPS Coaches Scout WPSL Players

As over 60 Women's Premier Soccer League (WPSL) players slid into tackles, jostled for position and battled for 50-50 balls, Women's Professional Soccer (WPS) coaches and general managers, all donning sunglasses, sat in a row on white plastic chairs at midfield. Notebooks drawn, they analyzed play, jotted down thoughts on the athletes, and leaned over to point out tidbits to colleagues.

The WPSL Combine, held in Sacramento, California gave WPS representatives another opportunity to scout the top amateur league's players as the WPS teams prepare to stock their rosters over the next several months leading up to the new league's kickoff in April 2009.

Emma Hayes, head coach of the Chicago Red Stars, was among the coaches on hand observing the players compete in training sessions and games. "The amount of effort has been thoroughly professional," she said. "The intensity in the games has stood out and the level of play improved throughout the weekend."

At the beginning of the showcase, the participating players were split into four squads with each team contesting three games during the event. This presented at least one, if not two challenges for the players: playing with new teammates and in some cases playing out of position. But those tests had a pay off for the WPS coaches. "That is what makes it easy to identify players," said New Jersey/New York assistant coach Denise Reddy. "If a player can come into one of these showcases and stand out in those circumstances, then it's definitely a player worth looking at a little bit harder."

As he watched the WPSL Combine, Boston Breakers head coach Tony DiCicco was mentally comparing the athletes. "Having players like Jen Lalor-Nielsen, Ouying Zhang and Brooke O'Hanley, who all have past WUSA experience, on the field is good for us as we can measure other players against them," said Tony DiCicco. "We're very appreciative of the WPSL for putting on this event and giving us this opportunity to see these players."

Like DiCicco, Washington Freedom head coach Jim Gabarra sought to visualize how the WPSL players would have fit into the level of play in the WUSA, the professional league he coached in from 2001-2003. Gabarra also used the showcase to catch up on a few players he had lost tabs on. "I watched some of them over the years in college so it's giving me an idea of where they are now, if they've gotten better since college and how they've progressed," he said.

Matt Driver, the managing partner of Philadelphia's 2010 WPS expansion team and owner of three WPSL teams, coached one of the showcase squads while also compiling notes on all of the competing players. "For me for 2010, it's fantastic because there are one or two girls who need seasoning," he said. "I'm looking at a 22 year old and going holy cow, if she's from Philadelphia I would take her in a heart beat. I'm also looking at a 33 year old and if she was living in Philadelphia I would take her right now. Will they or won't they be available next year is really irrelevant. It's a really good opportunity for me to see what's out here."

The mission of WPS is to be the premier women's soccer league in the world. Play kicks off in the spring of 2009, with WPS teams based in the Bay Area, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New Jersey/New York, St. Louis and Washington, D.C. The Millburn Magic is the Northern NJ member of the WPSL, an independent national league representing the highest level of women's soccer in the United States.

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More about the WPSL at www.wpsl/info
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