*A Word From... is part of a series of monthly articles from Alaska Rush Soccer Club's Techinical Director and Directors of Coaching. Each week, a different Director will submit an article pertaining to Alaska Rush, Rush Soccer or even world football in general. It's an opportunity for our readership to gain more insight on the sport and understand further what Alaska Rush Soccer Club is about and what Rush Soccer offers it's Members.*

## A Word From... Technical Director

Tonight, I believe, the landscape of youth soccer in Anchorage, if not Alaska, is going to change forever. Tonight, Friday October 5, 2012, the inaugural game of the Alaska Premier League kicks-off. Remember this date because it's Day One, Year One of a paradigm change. It's historic in our own little neck of the youth soccer woods.

The proverbial question then arises, what is so special about a soccer game? Why will it change the landscape?

Well, for starters, Alaska isn't a hotbed of soccer as compared to the rest of the United States. In fact, to put it honestly, we're at a disadvantage because of our geographic proximity, limited population, and mostly, in my opinion, climate. Though challenged geographically for a greater variety of competition, at least Hawaii Rush has beautiful weather that facilitates a truer version of the game 12-months out of the year. We, on the other hand, play indoors 8-9 months out of the year which is not only unnatural for such an extended period of time, it's quite frankly costly. To operate a facility that is large enough to house a full-size soccer field is expensive. Hence, only one major player in that department in Anchorage. So to compensate, Alaskan soccer players


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play small-sided throughout most of the year which is great for getting more touches on the ball, but isn't very helpful in terms of preparing our players and teams to play on the Outside. Since I arrived in Alaska in May 2011, I quickly came to understand it's the norm rather than the exception that Alaskan teams don't fair well in the Lower 48.

And for me, that is unacceptable. As I stated in last month's article, I want Alaska Rush to be the best soccer club in the state. And in order to be the best, you have to beat the best!

As mentioned above, I arrived in Alaska in May 2011. I came from Japan, living there eight years. Japan is a country which faces a number of challenges. It has a limited natural resources, if any, which plays into its reliance on nuclear energy. It sits on the Pacific Rim of Fire, where 90% of the world's earthquakes occur. And its capital, Tokyo (where I lived for my time there) is the world's most populous city with over 32,450,000 people living in the metropolitan area. I believe it's safe to say space is at a premium in Tokyo.

Much of my admiration for the Japanese is their ability to adapt. With limited natural resources and the dangers of relying solely on nuclear energy now evident, Japan's waste management system is second to none and over 50% of its solid waste is recycled. Urban infrastructure are designed with earthquake-proofing in mind, hence the limited damage to Tokyo after the 9.0 Sendai earthquake on March 11, 2011. And with space such a premium in one of the world's most densely populated cities, Japanese football has taken to the roofs of city skyscrapers as futsal courts span the Tokyo skyline from Tachikawa to Ueno to Shinjuku to Yokohama. An adapted version of soccer is played whenever and wherever the opportunity arises and the Japanese players are better for it (and even won a World Cup because of it).

And this is the point: Don't be limited by your surroundings and traditional. Find a way to get it done. To achieve one's goals. It's one of Rush's Core Values…Tenacity: To be successful, persevere…persevere, but do not be anxious. Fear no one. Be strong and courageous, Work when no one is looking, even when the circumstances are not right and everyone quits. Diligence never loses because it never quits. Out work your opponent, and most importantly, work smart. Don't wait for external inspiration. The people who go far do so because they motivate themselves and give life their best, regardless of how they feel.

Again, my goal is for Alaska Rush to be the best soccer club in the state. And in order to do that, we need to compete on the Outside. And in


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order to compete on the Outside, we need to play a more truer version of the game more months out of the year at a higher level. And considering our challenges and what we do have to work with, the concept for the Alaska Premier League was born. Football, 9-a-side football over an extended season, for elite teams and players, playing the game like it's played around the world. We are offering the opportunity to raise the level of play and competition so perhaps one day it isn't only Colorado Rush or Florida Rush holding aloft a national championship, but also Alaska Rush.

We are not being held back by old paradigms. We are changing the the world!


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