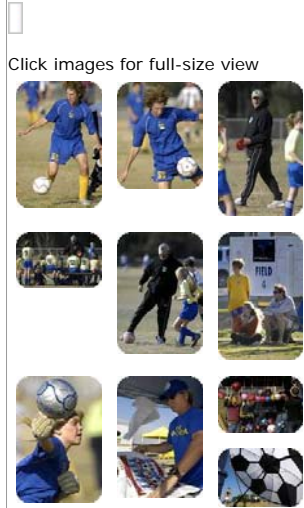


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Pensacola Classic begins today



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As head coach of the Gulf Breeze girl's soccer team from 1999-2002, Mike Lagow took his team to three state championships, winning two.

So why would Lagow be just as excited to coach his club teams in this weekend's Pensacola Classic? It's just one sign of how club soccer has evolved.

Hosted by the Pensacola Futbol Club, the Pensacola Classic will get started the Girls under-11 and under-12 divisions along with the boys under-14 and under-17 groups at 8 a.m. at Ashton Brosnham Park.

Lagow, coach of the Pensacola High girls team during the high school soccer season, will be coaching the Pensacola Futbol Club's (PFC) under-13 and under-14 girls teams during the 103-team, two-day event.

"To win a state championship at the high school level is a phenomenal feeling and a certainly a good accomplishment," Lagow said. "But it's nothing compared to winning a state championship at the club level. It is extremely difficult."

The reason for the difficulty is that the primary concern for club coaches is to develop players. Especially with the younger age groups, the score of the game secondary to improving each individual.

"We will certainly try to win the games," Lagow said. "But we will do things that hopefully will help them win down the road and get recruited. When you watch club, you are watching more of soccer in terms of development."

Lagow, one of 10 coaches on the PFC staff, has seen plenty of results lately.

Nine PFC girls signed college scholarships last week including Lindsey Williams, who inked a scholarship with the Florida Gators.

"(Club soccer) is all about playing with people better than you to better yourself," Williams said.

The development of future college players will continue this weekend.

While the opening matches will be held throughout the day today, the finals of the Pensacola Classic will take place Sunday.

"We're getting more kids in college (scholarships) now," Lagow said. "And that is what the club is for."

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