

U-18'S CAPTURE REGIONAL TITLE

The Lafreniere/Chicago Fire U-18 Gamblers won the Region III Central Division Title with wins over FC Alliance, the Tennessee State Champions, and Brentwood 92 Elite, the Tennessee Finalists, this past weekend in Memphis, Tennessee. In Saturday night's game, the Gamblers faced a talented Tennessee team which played an aggressive, disciplined style of soccer. The game was even until the 35th minute in the first half when Patrick Mullins made a run and was taken down and fouled approximately 24 yards from the goal. Mullins, who has been deadly on direct kicks, bent the ball over the wall into the upper right corner giving the Gamblers a 1-0 lead at half time. The second half was a hard fought battle with some unusual calls by the referee. All told the teams were very well matched and the Gamblers weathered the one break down that would have allowed Tennessee to tie.

Sunday morning brought nicer weather and a chance to clinch a regional title with a win or a tie. In the opening minute, Mullins intercepted a sloppy pass from a fullback and was able to chip the goalie for an early 1-0 league. Two minutes later, Brian Flint intercepted a ball from a Brentwood Midfielder, played it 20 yards to Mullins near mid field. Mullins redirected the ball to Jordan Schwartz who overlapped Flint from his fullback position. The left footed Schwartz then drilled the ball to the lower right corner from 18 yards out to put the Gamblers up 2-0. Zack Smith came off the bench and made a superb run down the left side beating two men and forced the goalie to come off his line. He passed the ball across the box to Patrick Mullins who netted his second goal of the game and gave the Gamblers an insurmountable 3-0 lead at half time.

In the second half the goals continued to flow as Zack Smith scored from the left side unassisted on a 25 yard shot which hit on the back of the net. Midway through the second half, Jordan Schwartz spotted Brian Flint on the right wing and lofted a 40 yard pass to Flint at the 18 yard line. Flint headed the ball into the box where Patrick Warwick headed it in for the fifth goal of the game. In a light hearted mood, Coach Jose Portillo pushed some defenders up top and the entire team funneled the ball to Bryce Luquet in an attempt to get him open shots. Luquet connected on the third try for his first RPL goal.

Over the course of the regional premiere league play, the Gamblers scored 20 goals. The defense led by goalie, Joe Hart, and fullbacks, Alex Brignac, Jordan Schwartz and Jordan Scott, only gave up one goal during the course of the entire season. With the Mid-South division title, the Gamblers automatically qualify for regional play in 2010 in their quest for the National Championship.