

Bellingham United 2017 Season Preview Release

There is plenty to be excited about for the 2017 Evergreen Premier League season. The Bellingham United has played three matches (1-1 in league play) so far with two of them being league matches and one against the Seattle Sounders U23 club! This weekend United host the Oly Town Artesians with kickoff is this Sunday at 3 PM with **all WCYSA players getting free admission if they wear their team jersey!**

The 2017 EPLWA season anticipation is a culmination of the momentum built from the Bellingham United's most recent Western Indoor Soccer League (WISL) Championship indoor season, core players returning, and reinforcements that will make immediate impacts upon their arrival.

The Hammers finished as semi-finalist's in the PASL national indoor tournament and as back to back champions in the Western Indoor Soccer League. Much of the team who traveled to Nationals in Phoenix makes up the outdoor team alongside with the assistance of some fresh faces. True soccer heads know that indoor is a completely distinctive style game than outdoor. There is still plenty of room for improvement and many opportunities for the team to grow as one cohesive unit.



Core players to watch include, Brendan Quilici (M), Richard Henderson (F) (Captains), Sawyer Preston (D), Kurtis Pederson (F), Rene Caro (M), Nick Cashmere (F). "One thing all these players share is the ability to increase the level of play when they are on the pitch along with a wealth of knowledge and experience for the game." Comments United Head Coach Lance Calloway. Depth is abundant for United this season with a healthy return from Trevor Bartels (D) as a knee injury ended his season 5 matches into the 2016 season. As well as familiar faces within the league that will now be suiting up

in black and white kits this season. Brady Ulen (D), formerly with Spokane Shadow, at center back, Eleazar Galvan (M), formerly with Wenatchee FC, as an attacking midfielder, and Olegario Orozco (D) also from Wenatchee. This year we will also have Conner Moe (D) a proven force in the back line, joining us for the full season as he is no longer on the WWU Men's staff.

Additionally, to the players mentioned above, as with most of the EPLWA squads we are all going to have an influx of players as the collegiate spring seasons conclude. The talent pool available to the Hammers is assuring heading into the extensive summer of soccer. Bellingham is home to many elite soccer programs such as the University of Western Washington. In the pre-season BUFC and WWU matched up and demonstrated that we are family. It is evident when players interchange between squads such as, Luke Olney (M), Tyler Visten (GK), and Jeremiah Lee (D/M). "All three of these players will come in straight away competing for a spot in our first 11." Calloway commented. As well as, Nick Morgan (D) and Greyden Saunders (M) will also be joining the side in early May. Whatcom County product, Bryce Logan (GK) from University of Washington will be strengthening the Hammers and challenging Visten for time between the posts. Bellingham United will have returning defenders Nick Ulowetz from Gonzaga University and Christian Caro from St. Martins University, "adding to a formidable defending core."

Calloway states. Players from Cal State Baptist Univ., Trinity Western Univ., and Montana State Billings Univ. will all be linking up with United this upcoming season.

The Hammers managed to go undefeated in the pre-season and score numerous goals, however it is only the tip of the iceberg. A challenge that always emerges entering the lengthy season is fielding a consistent lineup. Many of the players are either working, attending school full-time, battling injuries, and are dealing with other life events. There are bright moments and key areas to learn from this year's preseason. "I still feel we have some work to do to bring our entire squad together as a cohesive unit and where it should be. As this squad gels together I believe we will be able to find the back of the net while posting a strong defense shutting down the opposition." Calloway says. The pre-season matches served as a great testing grounds for the coaches and players to survey what options are available, "However, they honestly don't mean anything come kick off for the competitive season but it is important to establish a winning culture and set grand expectations for going into the season. The last two years I have been lucky enough to be involved in a group that has only known winning with back to back indoor championships and a strong second placed finish in the EPLWA last year. I mentioned to the players after our last game there is no point in being coy at this stage, it is no secret that we are targeting a winning season and will be one of the favorites. I hope the team can feed off that expectation and produce quality displays in congruence with positive results." Richard Henderson, one of BUFC's captains. It is imperative that the class and level of play remain consistent as the season goes on with different players rostering with the first team.

Some bright spots of this year's pre-season are the play of former and newly added players making their presence felt. "A few surprises in the pre-season has been the play of Tyler Hughes (M), a Squalicum HS Senior. Tyler has been training with BUFC and playing for our reserve squad for the past 4 years, but this season he has matured quite a bit and his play in training and the exhibition matches will be earning him time with our first team. Tyler is a very technical player and I believe he will surprise a few people this season. Ivan Colin (F), who had joined the squad several matches into the season last year, returns to the squad and he has had a good pre-season scoring a few goals and recording a few assists. Ivan's field awareness has improved and has made him more effective. Another local player, Zach Wanne (D) has impressed us a lot. Zach is 6'5" and is very active in the back and loves to get forward. He is quickly adjusting to the level of play and I can see him also challenging for time." Calloway said. The BUFC team heading into this weekend's match-up is going to be tried. They will have many attacking threats to entertain the fans and a solid back line to diffuse the opposition.

Last year's runner-up, Bellingham United FC, is challenging the defending champions, Vancouver Victory FC, this Sunday! This match will set the tone for the rest of the league, "Even though the result on Sunday won't decide the season it is of paramount importance that we get off to a good start so we can build upon for the rest of the season. We will have a good crowd out and the team always wants to reward the fantastic fans we have with quality performances and results." Henderson said. Vancouver were the deserved winners last season they played a, "disciplined style and have several dangerous attackers particularly, Timur Zhividze, as he scored 20+ goals last season for Corban University." Calloway commented. Victory failed to defeat the Hammers at home last year and walked out of the stadium with 1-1 tie. Both teams truly tested each other and it will be interesting to see how the measure up this year, Calloway says, "to see where you are you have to play the best competition you can." Without a doubt this is the match of the week and the anticipation for the competition is shared by players, coaches, and fans. Brendan Quilici mentions, "the key for us going into this game and throughout the season is our defending.

If we can defend well and not give up any goals we will give ourselves a good shot at winning a lot of games. We have a lot of attacking threats, so I don't think we will struggle to break teams down and score." The groups goals and ambitions for this year's season are to contest for the top spot and bring another championship to Bellingham. The best fans in the league will be in attendance in this weekend's clash. The atmosphere created by United's supporters is unrivaled to any other club in the league. The Bellingham community is truly dedicated and show genuine support for local soccer. We have an abundant amount of reasons to be excited about the upcoming EPLWA season!