



VA National Championship Series Semifinal Spotlight

12U Girls

VYSA's "Road to the National Championships" began in early March with over 100 of Virginia's elite teams in three age groups looking to earn their place as State Champions. 24 teams remain and will come together at the Publix Virginia Soccer Training Center on Saturday, May 19th, to play in the semi-final round with winners advancing to the finals on Sunday. State Champions will compete in the US Youth Soccer Regional Championships in June 2018 for a shot to advance to the National Championships in Texas next July. The US Youth Soccer National Championship is the most competitive and well established national youth soccer competition with all 50 states competing to earn the right to be named National Champion.

The 12U girls quarterfinal matches last weekend had an overtime, penalty kicks and upsets. The top ranked team, **Loudoun Red**, shut out Herndon in their quarterfinal match. Loudoun coach Dan Raben said "State Cup is a special event – a tournament that draws teams from all over the state in a win-or-go-home format. We're excited to be part of the semifinals, and eager for our matchup against Virginia Rush." Their semifinal opponent, **Virginia Rush**, shut out their quarterfinal opponent, Northern Virginia Soccer Club. This sets the stage for a great defensive struggle this weekend. Virginia Rush coach Matt Mittelstaedt is "very proud of these young ladies. They have worked very hard the last year and are looking forward to playing against the best teams in the state."

The other side of the bracket saw much closer matches. Third-ranked Arlington Red and sixth-ranked SYA Cardinals went to overtime to determine a winner. **Arlington** scored in overtime to advance to the semifinals. Arlington coach Gerardo Ramirez said "After an OT win against a tough SYA team we are excited and privileged to step on the field at Publix VSTC vs SOCA in a semi-final match."

In the final quarterfinal match, **SOCA** and Beach FC were still tied at the conclusion of overtime, forcing a winner to be determined by penalty kicks. Seventh-ranked SOCA upset second-ranked Beach in a thrilling series of penalty kicks. Amy Martin, SOCA's coach, noted "My team has learned over the past two years that any game can be won by either team. It is the team that shows up to play. Not only technically, tactically and physically, but even more so mentally. Our goal is to play good soccer and in doing so, success will come."