



Club soccer making mark Players come from three colleges

By **Will Harris**
Sports Writer

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The true test of an athlete's dedication to the sport is when they play for free. Make an athlete pay, and you know you have something special.

Albemarle United, a club soccer team made up of players from College of the Albemarle, Elizabeth City State and Mid-Atlantic Christian is made up of those type of players.

The team is literally a club that is student led and is it sponsored by the Student Government Association at COA.

There are no scholarships or special meals. They have uniforms, but the players paid for them. COA lets the team use one of its vans for it short trips to Virginia for away games, but the club has to reimburse the school for gas.

"It's all self-supported," coach John Wells said. "It's all out of pocket or they raise money and do fundraising."

The team wrapped up its season on Saturday, although a game against the Coast Guard could still be in the works. Such is the life of a club soccer player.

"They want to come out and they want to play at all the colleges," Wells said.

The roster is full of local players that played in high school and several that are just new to the game. and the team is comprised mainly of students from COA, with nearly have of the players coming from there.

But Wells is hoping the three schools can form a tight partnership that can help all involved.

"It's nice to be able to combine as a club team," Wells said. "We still have to work to where ECSU kicks in a little bit when we get a little more organized. They some more funding, vehicles and facilities. It's something we can keep doing."

Saturday's 1-0 loss to Tidewater Community College shows just how far the team has come. Albemarle United lost an earlier matchup against the same team 7-2.

"We haven't done real well, so this was a good game for us," Well said. "We're really improved. They played as a team they came together."

While the potential that the team could form into a full-fledged college team at some point, but there are no plans for that to happen. None of the schools have a soccer program, although each sponsors college athletics. ECSU has a full athletic program that competes at the NCAA Division II level and Mid-Atlantic Christian has basketball and volleyball teams. COA is just getting back to the playing field after a long absence with baseball and softball.

It can remain on the club level and compete for championships by joining the National Intercollegiate Club Sports Association.

"That's what I'd kind of like to do in the immediate future," Wells said.

Until then, they will hone their skills and get ready for the next game,

"These guys will probably start playing indoors," Wells said. "There's an indoor league up in Williamsburg they'll play in. We'll kick it about and maybe have some indoor here, five-a-side. Then we'll pick it up in the spring for four or five games."