

Alabama club succeeds with free soccer

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WHILE THE RISING COSTS OF youth soccer are colliding with the downward turn in the economy, one Alabama youth club in Alabama is trying to stem the tide with free soccer. The Vestavia Hills Soccer Club in Birmingham just concluded its first summer of the program, titled Team Adidas.

With the support of Adidas and the club, players were given a summer training program and uniforms -- all for no charge.

Rocky Harmon, who has coached for many years in the Southeast, is the club's executive director. He took the club's oldest team to the recent U.S. Club Soccer National Collegiate Showcase, where Vestavia finished 2-1-1 in the showcase format.

Bret Dexter had all the goals in a 1-0 win over the Parsippany Predators and 2-1 win over Pittsburgh Strikers.

"Soccer is one of the few sports in the country where the better you get, the more expensive the game gets," said Harmon. "We wanted to do something on a grassroots level, to give back to the game and the kids, and it worked beyond our expectations."

Tryouts for all three teams were open to players from all clubs. Adidas chipped in with uniforms for over 90 players, and the club took care of all the other fees.