



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### 2007 International Soccer Festival Comes to Six Alabama Cities - April 22-28

**(Birmingham, AL)** – Alabama will host one of the largest women’s soccer events outside of the Olympics and World Cup games as Futbol Internacional 2007 kicks off April 22-28 in six cities to benefit the Alabama Youth Soccer Association.

The event features national women’s teams from Argentina, Canada, China, Trinidad & Tobago, Mexico and the USA (Under-21 team). Futbol Internacional starts in Birmingham’s historic Legion Field, home of the 1996 Olympic Soccer matches, with opening ceremonies and double-header games. It will end with triple-header finals in Mobile’s Baker High School stadium.

“Every soccer fan in the state and surrounding states will be able to see one of the largest international soccer events in the world,” says event organizer Scott Spencer. “With the success and excitement that international matches have brought to Alabama, AYSA wanted to bring a global event that touches communities all over the state.”

The games will take the women’s teams to venues across the state from Birmingham, with stops in Huntsville, Tuscaloosa, Decatur, Montgomery and finally to Mobile.

“Not only will this bring international soccer to our doorstep, but this event will use its proceeds to build healthy outreach soccer programs to underserved children in the Black Belt, in conjunction with Governor Bob Riley’s Black Belt Action Committee, and inner-city soccer programs,” Spencer says.

Though the festival is about empowering youth in soccer and raising awareness of ‘futbol’ – as it is called around the world – it is also expected to raise Alabama’s image in the wide world of soccer, says Nichelle Gainey, President and CEO of SilverStone International, a sports marketing and consulting firm.

She is lending her company’s support to raise awareness of the soccer event with the help of Alabama’s governmental and corporate communities. She is also using the international connections she’s made through her involvement with the 2006 World Cup and members of the Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA) to bring in dignitaries from the teams’ home countries.

“I am very passionate about women sports, and after returning from Mexico watching the men’s national team, I found this event to be a great opportunity to showcase the love of this sport that is seen worldwide,” Gainey says. “So I am excited to lend my name and influence to bring in other sports organizations to help make Futbol Internacional one of the premier sporting events that Alabama has ever experienced.”

Supporters of the 2006 youth soccer fund-raising event included Governor Riley, U.S. Senator Richard Shelby, and U.S. Rep. Artur Davis.

“Alabama is fast becoming the destination of choice for foreign corporations looking for a talented workforce and a hospitable to do business,” Gov. Riley says. “I think sports like soccer, or anything international in scope, tends to make us more competitive in the international markets.”

Futbol Internacional is expected to generate a statewide economic impact of about \$2.4 million as people from the participating nationalities and youth soccer players attend the week-long event.

As an event of the Alabama Youth Soccer Association, all **20,000 AYSA registered players** will receive one free ticket to either the opening matches or the finals. The first 5,000 registered youth players from other states will also be eligible for free tickets. In addition, the festival will include six free youth clinics, a coaching symposium featuring International coaches, and a banquet honoring the teams, sponsors, and special guests.

Proceeds from Futbol Internacional will aid the development of a youth soccer complex in Mobile County and support a youth soccer scholarship fund, among other projects.

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