

NEWS

THE IMPACT OF CULTURE: COLORADO RAPIDS WOMEN



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Colorado has long been a women's soccer hotbed.

Just look at the current **U.S. Women's National Team** roster: WPSL alumna and two-time (http://www.machermann Trophy.org/) winner, **Jaelen Howell**, along with **Lindsey Horan** the talent-rich Colorado youth soccer system – like Howell, Pugh and Smith also had stints

For decades the state has been a consistent and ready feeder to universities and colleges active players from Colorado in the professional ranks – including **2021 WPSL Mountain** (https://www.wpslsoccer.com/news/2021/08/17/2021-west-region-all-conference-tear) the **Portland Thorns** (https://www.timbers.com/thornsfc/players/natalie-beckman/) (https://www.timbers.com/thornsfc/players/natalie-beckman/) after a stand-out career :

Beckman, with a conference-leading 10 goals and 14 assists, helped the **Colorado Rapids** title in 2021. In just its second season in the league (*play was canceled in 2020 due to COVID*) its 10-match 2021 schedule—an early season 2-2 draw with eventual conference runner otherwise perfect record—on the way to the Mountain Conference championship, an accomplished season.

"Our goal is to repeat as conference champions," **Sebastian Giraldo**, Colorado Rapids Women's head coach, said after joining the Rapids Women organization after high-level coaching stints in south Texas. "There is certainly not going to be easy."

With the addition of two new Utah-based teams for the 2022 season, the conference was featuring six Colorado-based clubs, and the **Wasatch Division**, featuring five Utah-based clubs will face off for the Mountain Conference championship, hosted by the winner of the Wasatch Central Region semi-final, along with the winners of the Midwest, Northern, and Ohio Valley

The addition of Giraldo in December of 2021 is part of the **Colorado Rapids Youth Soccer** Women as the pinnacle organization for pre-professional women's soccer in the region. Giraldo is a federation coaching education instructor, and earned a doctorate from the **University of Colorado**. The Rapids Youth organization also entered in a partnership with **Regis University** in northwestern

the university's athletic facilities, including two lighted turf fields, a natural grass stadium indoor training, and classroom facilities.

"With our partnership with Regis we now have access to the best training and game facilities league," Giraldo said. "This will help us continue to attract the top talent, which will attract"

In 2021, five Rapids Women players earned All-Mountain Conference honors. Giraldo is

"We have a lot of returning players from last season," Giraldo said. "We are counting on them hard to establish over the last couple of years in place, from the way we train, to the way"

Giraldo said he has fielded calls from players from some of the top college programs in the organization, wanting to spend the summer playing for the Rapids Women.

"The word is out about what we are doing here," Giraldo said. "This is where players want and people, in a true pre-professional environment."

Giraldo estimates there are five or six players on this year's roster with professional aspirations at the professional level if they so choose, including some of the program's elite youth players

"We're here to help them make that next step. This is just a little more than just a team for us," Giraldo said. "We want everything we do to be as professional as possible."

Giraldo said he looks to build on the attacking style of play for which the Rapids Women

"We're going to play even more attractive, possession-based, attacking soccer," Giraldo said. "It's something fun and entertaining to watch when they come out to watch us play, [and] they know it's not going to be easy though. Every single game we will have a target on our back"

The Colorado Rapids Women kick off the 2022 season **Sunday, May 22** (<https://www.wpsl.com/news/2022/05/05/the-impact-of-culture--colorado-rapids-womens>) versus **Indios Denver FC** at Regis University.

Colorado Rapids Women Full Schedule

5/22 vs. Indios Denver FS

5/28 vs. Colorado Rush

6/2 @ Colorado Rush

6/5 vs. Colorado Pride

6/10 @ BC United

6/11 @ Broomfield Burn

6/18 @ Indios Denver FC

6/19 vs. BC United

6/25 @ Colorado Pride

6/30 vs. Broomfield Burn



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