

# National Identification Camp Journal

By Luke Haakenson  
Special to Soccer Times

*This past August 1-7, US Youth Soccer Region II ODP sent four boys from Minnesota — Mukwalle Akale of Minneapolis, Luke Haakenson of Maple Grove, Maximiliano Steigwardt of Maple Grove and Jackson Yueill of Bloomington — to the U.S. Under-14 Boys' National Identification Camp led by Manny Schellscheidt.*

*The National ID camp brought together 119 players from around the country to Concord, Mass., for seven days of training and evaluation. The training camp generally consists of training in the morning and matches in the afternoon. The evening includes programming designed to introduce the athletes to the National Team environment and how to prepare themselves for potential call-ups to national teams in the future. The Under-14 program introduces young players to a level of soccer they would not otherwise see at such a young age and allows the country's top youths the chance to experience soccer at its highest level and in an international setting.*

*Sophie Babo of Maple Grove and Amber Greely of St. Michael were also selected for the U.S. Under-14 Girls' National ID Camp, held July 31-Aug. 6 in Portland, Ore.*

*As the MYSA State Director of Coaching, I wanted to personally congratulate all of you on your accomplishments through US Youth Soccer ODP, your selection to the Region II ODP Pool and further selection to the U.S. Soccer U14 National ID Camp. Below is a journal from Luke Haakenson to give us an idea of the experience from a player's perspective.*

**John Curtis**

*MYSA Director of Coaching and Player Development*

## Sunday, Aug. 1 (Day I)

Today I got up at 4:40 a.m. to get ready to take the plane to camp. When we got there, Kim Yueill got us in first class — very cool. Bye, Minnesota.

When I got to the camp for the first time today, I had nerves and butterflies. I was scared. But, I knew I had to get the job done.

I met some of the players today and man, do they look good. I already heard rumors from the other guys today about how good the players are going to be. When I arrived at our first training, I did not know what to expect — this is all new. But, I do know every player here is very talented.

I got to my first training tonight and began to put on my brand new Nike cleats and the National Team Kit. It was amazing. I have never felt before as I did when I walked out of the locker room with the USA jersey



on. I looked down at the U.S.

Soccer badge on my shirt. I felt like I had to play even harder because now I am not just about soccer

back home, I am representing my country. I looked around me and couldn't believe that I was here.

We began to warm up and train very hard. I looked around and there were good players, and then players that were outstanding, "lights out." I knew I'd have to work really hard.

The first night went really quick, everybody worked hard to show their stuff to the coaches. I had to go to bed, but I knew in my head what that day just meant. I knew what I had to do to make the National Team.

## Monday, Aug. 2 (Day II)

I got up today at 6:45 a.m. I made sure I had a really good breakfast because I will need it on the field. I am really excited to be with my Region II Team. I can tell everyone has the same excitement. Practice was hard, intense but fun.

Tonight we played Region I. We won the match 2-0. Coach was happy, but reminded us this is just one game. We have a long week ahead of us. There is a kid named Amadu in Region I. I have never seen a player like this. He is "lights out good!"

There are amazing kids here, everyone has skills and showed them today. We have been prepared well to be here and to make our Region proud.

## Tuesday, Aug. 3 (Day II)

Got up this morning and ate breakfast with the team. Practice was hard today. I can tell everyone is starting to get tired. I tell myself, "Keep going, keep going, keep going." Coaches pushed us today. Rest time was good.

A nutritionist named Leslie Bonci came to talk to us today. She worked with us on how to eat and drink to perform on the field. The right food at the right time before a game means strong performance.

We played Region IV tonight. We lost 2-0. We had them, too. They were really good both tactically and technically, and gave us a test. They were already good as a team.

Everyone is a good player here. I have to get rest for tomorrow.

### **Wednesday, Aug. 4 (Day IV)**

Got up this morning with the same routine. After the talk yesterday, I know what I need to eat and drink to perform.

Arrived at the field this morning, and really took it all in. I got to train with Coach Manny today. He is incredible. I tried to work so hard and soak in everything he was saying and telling us to do. He is the head of the U14 Boys National Team. This is a great day.

Coach Manny told us something today that really made me think. He said, "Boys, when you go back home, you are going to be the best players in your club. I don't want you to go back and just coast through. You need to go back, elevate your game and make those around you better and stronger, that's what I need you to do." I know what my National Coach expects me to do when I get home to Minnesota.

I got to play with new players today and met new friends from all over. How cool is this to see kids from all over the U.S., all loving this game.

The game was bad tonight. We did not play well and we knew it. There were new kids added to our team that did not perform. Old kids struggled everywhere. Not a good game. I know I have to keep working hard so the coaches see what I am made of. Everyone is getting tired. I have to keep going. Have to stay positive.

### **Thursday, Aug. 5 (Day V)**

Got up this morning with bitterness about the loss. Do not want to lose like that again. I know I have to train hard today. I like my new teammates; we are having fun.

Everyone is still playing hard today. Tonight's game was better. We won 7-1 after the loss last night. It was a good response after that bad loss last night. Too tired to write anything else.



### **Friday, Aug. 6 (Day VI)**

I cannot believe this is our last day. I am going to soak in everything today because tomorrow it is back to reality.

Got to play tennis soccer today. Fun!

This was the last game tonight. We tied 3-3 against Team I. I would have liked to win the last game. It was really hard to leave the field tonight knowing that I have to go home in a few hours. Tomorrow I start working hard to get back here. There are going to be some great things that we are going to do as a Region II team this year. My Region II coaches prepared me to be here. I left everything on the field.

### **Saturday, Aug. 7 (Day VI)**

Up at 2:45 a.m., to catch a plane. I'm tired. I do not want to go home. I want to stay and play. Back home to Minnesota. Coach Manny has given me a job to do. Play hard, elevate my game and make others around me in Minnesota better. Will start this on Monday.