The U16 Michigan Rush Northville girls are headed to Regionals in 2013 after a 1-0 win in the Michigan State Cup final against the Michigan Jaguars over the weekend! The win by the 16's mark the first State Cup Championship for the Michigan Rush!

The final game was played at Ultimate Soccer Arena in Pontiac on October 27th. The stage was set for a re-match of last year's final as the Rush again faced off against the Michigan Jaguars of Novi. Last year's game was hard-fought all the way through regulation time and two overtime periods, with the ultimate result determined by shoot-out. The Jaguars were confident on the line and bested the heartbroken Rush at this one test of skill.

This year's contest, however, would not get that far, and the Rush girls would persevere to maintain a 1-0 lead gained in the first OT period. The first half was intense, but fairly evenly matched, perhaps giving a slight edge to the Rush girls for control of the game and time of possession. While the defense, including Morgan Gozdor, Tara Pawloski, Karen Lovelace, and Sara Castellano, worked to keep the ball out of the Rush zone for the most part, keeper Emily Maresh came up with a clutch save to keep the Jags off the board. Midfielders Gabby Mencotti, Taylor Babcock and Erin Winters kept pushing forward, and Forwards Alana Dorfstatter, Kelly McHugh, Margaret Terhune and Kyra Dahring stressed the Jaguar defense with steady pressure. But the Rush could not find net, or capitalize on corner or free kicks, and halftime's score was a 0-0 tie.

The second half saw a little more intensity from the Jags, and a little less control and possession by the Rush. Maresh and the Rush D were able to fend off several good scoring opportunities by the Jags; and the goal-post was the Rush enemy, turning away shots by Dorfstatter and Pawloski. As the seconds and minutes ticked by, memories of last year's regulation 0-0 tie came rushing back, with both teams appearing desperate to score. Despite the tremendous effort by both teams, regulation came to an end with nothing on the board.

To this point, neither team had been able to advance from free kick opportunities, but the Rush

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caught their break mid-way through the first OT as Dahring was fouled in Jag territory. Lovelace took the free kick and Mencotti directed the header into the far corner. With momentum on the Rush side, the girls resumed control and ended the first OT up 1-0. The longest fifteen minutes ever played on the pitch then ensued, but the fresh legs of Megan Kerr helped to keep up the Rush pressure. Confidence was evident on the faces of the Rush players, and they continued play like they knew it was their win to keep.

The Rush team was very well-supported with dedicated Rush staff including Head Coach Angel Calzadilla, Director of Coaching Mark Zathey, and guest coach Dave Hart, as well as a huge showing of incredible fans.

Congratulations again to the entire Michigan Rush Northville organization for this awesome achievement!

Pictured are top row: Mark Zathey, Erin Winters, Kelly McHugh, Kelly Schmidt, Tara Pawloski, Dave Hart, Alana Dorfstatter, Karen Lovelace, Courtney Tyler, Paige Messmer, Angel Calzadilla. Middle: Margaret Terhune, Morgan Gozdor, Gabby Mencotti, Kyra Dahring, Sarah Castellano, Megan Kerr. Front: Taylor Babcock, Emily Maresh.

Region II Rush clubs have had a great fall so far in State Cup play with Wisconsin Rush and Iowa Rush both winning two titles in addition to the Michigan girls. For a complete listing of State Cup Winners for the 2012/13 season, please click here.

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