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**(S.D.)- SD School Of Mines Releases 2014 Men's Soccer Schedule**



By: Jeremy Anderson Posted at: 02/07/2014 10:47 AM

(Rapid City, SD)- The South Dakota School of Mines men's soccer team is looking to make a name for itself and become a competitive program in 2014 as the Hardrockers will play their final season in the Great Northwest Athletic Conference (GNAC).

After one season in the GNAC, the SD Mines men's soccer program along with the rest of the Hardrocker Athletics teams will all become members of the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference.

"It's been an awesome experience to be a member of the GNAC," said Hardrocker soccer head coach Joe Burger. "That league is one of the toughest in NCAA Div. II men's soccer. Our guys really want to put forth a good showing as we exit the GNAC --- and head into the RMAC with some momentum."

With a season of conference play under their belts and the roster starting to show maturity, 2014 will be an opportune time for the Hardrockers to make some waves.

"We will have a number of players this year with valuable college experience," Burger said. "We will also know what it takes to be successful in the GNAC. There are really no surprises on the schedule. We know what has to be done."

The Hardrockers will have a great home stand to open the season with their first seven games in the friendly confines of Sioux Park Stadium.

SD Mines opens the season as the hosts of the Mt. Rushmore Season Kickoff Tournament Sept. 5 and 7. SD Mines takes on the University of Illinois- Springfield Sept. 5 followed by a match against Upper Iowa University (Fayette, Iowa) Sept. 7. Fellow GNAC member Montana State-Billings will also attend the tournament.

The following weekend (Sept. 12 and 14), the Hardrockers will host the GNAC/MIAA Challenge. The Hardrockers, along with the University of Mary (Bismarck, N.D.), will go head-to-head with Fort Hays State (Hays, Kan.) and Southwest Baptist University (Bolivar, Mo.).

"This will be a great way to kick start the 2014 season," Burger said. "These games will set the tone early for the Hardrockers. We will get to see some great programs from different regions of the country before we dive right into conference competition."

The GNAC schedule begins Sept. 20 with a home game against Mary followed by Saint Martin's University (Lacey, Wash.) and Seattle Pacific University (Seattle, Wash.) coming the Rapid City the following weekend (Sept. 25 and 27). The Hardrockers matched up well against these programs last year and had excellent opportunities to win. This season's bouts should prove to be exciting and just as competitive.

The first road trip for the Hardrockers will be Oct. 2 when SD Mines head to Idaho to face Northwest Nazarene University (Nampa, Ida.) and then challenge the MSUB Yellow Jackets Oct. 5 in Billings, Mont.

The Hardrockers return home for their final two weeks of GNAC play welcoming Simon Fraser University (Burnaby, BC) Oct. 9, Western Washington University ( Monmouth, Ore.) , Oct. 11 and then rematches with MSU-Billings on Oct. 16 and Northwest Nazarene on Oct. 18.

“Those games will close out our home schedule,” Burger said. “The last stretch of the season will be on the road and that’s where we will find out what our team is made of.”

The Hardrockers make back-to-back trips to the West Coast with stops at Seattle Pacific (Oct. 23), Saint Martin’s University (Oct. 25), Western Washington (Oct. 30) and Simon Fraser (Nov. 1).

The last game of the regular Season will be a rematch against SD Mines’ travel partner University of Mary which will be played Oct. 8 in Bismarck, N.D.

“It’s going to be a challenging season for the Hardrockers,” Burger said. “But it’s a challenge that our guys are up for.