

## FFC DUO ENJOY, LEARN FROM TRIPS TO EUROPE

Two Fredericksburg FC players had the honor of being selected to teams that played overseas this year.

Fourteen-year old Rylie White, who plays for FFC '03 Girls Black, and 16-year-old Tyus Jones, who plays FFC '00 Boys Black, were both selected to play in events held in Europe earlier this year.



After her father, Raymond White, received an email about tryouts for her age group of the Virginia Olympic Development Program, Rylie was able to capitalize on the opportunity by making the pool of players that would make the trip for her age group.

"I did not think I was going to get selected, so I didn't get excited right away. When I found out I was selected, I was thrilled and couldn't wait to go," the rising Massaponax High School freshman said. "I tried really hard at the district and state practices and at the ODP tournaments. I did my best to impress them, because I realized it was a good opportunity and it would really help my soccer career."

Tyus got his chance after receiving a team email from his FFC Coach, Ryan Zinkhan, about a tryout for the Club Champions League United - 2000 Boys team, a tryout in which only CCL players were eligible if their clubs recommended them.



"I was very intrigued by the information provided so I submitted my name to FFC that I was interested in being considered as a player to recommend for the tryout," the rising Massaponax junior said. "I was ecstatic [when I got picked]. The thought of traveling and playing overseas for a couple of weeks with a team of highly competitive soccer players within the CCL against other players older than me made me realize very quickly what a tremendous opportunity this was for my soccer career."

Rylie and her ODP teammates would travel to Germany and the Czech Republic for games and training from April 8-16, while Tyus' trip to Denmark, then Sweden for the prestigious Gothia Cup ran from July 12-23.



Rylie made the trip without her family, a decision her mother Kristen White said was tough to make, but that the family thought would be for the best.

"When she was selected to go to Germany and represent the Virginia ODP team, my heart initially sank," said Kristen, who also has another daughter, Avery, that plays for the FFC U13 Black team. "I was very nervous about her going to Germany by herself, but I was not going to let my own fears and concerns get in the way of a once in a lifetime experience for her.

"We knew Rylie would grow individually from this experience knowing that she could travel and survive on her own."

Whereas Rylie traveled on her own, Tyus' family made the decision to travel with him.

While his parents and two younger sisters made the trip, they were more there to enjoy Tyus' soccer experience from afar, while also taking advantage of a chance to take in the sites along the way.

"We decided that Gothia Cup was something that we didn't want to miss out on. We didn't want to take away from Tyus' experience, so we took our two daughters and attended the tournament as 'Fans in the Stands,'" said Tyus' mother Stacy Priddy, who also has two younger daughters, Olivia and Chloe, that play for FFC teams. "Also, we had never been

to any of the Scandinavian countries, so it sounded like a fun vacation too!”

Rylie’s trip took her through Dresden, Frankfurt, and Berlin, while in Germany, and Teplice in the Czech Republic. While in those cities, her team would train and get to play some friendlies against local teams.

They opened with a win against Fortuna Dresden, which was followed by another win against U15 FK Teplice in the Czech Republic. The squad then returned to Germany for its final two games where Rylie notched a goal in a win over Viktoria Berlin and the team closed out with its lone loss coming against Berolina Mitte.

It was a unique experience which Rylie expects will help her in the future.

“One of the things that will help me going forward is adapting to playing with different coaches and players, and different styles of play,” she said, adding “I think what I got most out of playing with this team was the competition level was very high and the game was very fast paced.”

Tyus’ journey started with a three-day stay at the FCN Hotel in Copenhagen, Denmark, which was a highlight because the CCL team stayed alongside other academy teams that were part of professional clubs, while also getting to train in the local professional club’s stadium.

During this stint, the team also traveled to Malmö, Sweden, to take on the Malmö FF Academy team—Malmö being where Swedish legend Zlatan Ibrahimovic got his professional start—where the squad dropped a 2-1 decision.

“This team was competitive and set the bar for us on the first day on what we were about to face,” Tyus said.



After returning to Copenhagen, the team also earned a 1-1 tied against local club HIK Academy, with Tyus netted the game-tying goal late in the first half.

The team then set off to Sweden to being play in the tournament where it “played up” in the Boys U18 age group. It finished group play with a 3-0 record, nine goals scored and zero allowed in wins against Måbjerg IF (Holstebro, Denmark), Brynäs IF/FK (Gävle, Sweden), and Nordhordland BK (Knarvik, Norway).

Unfortunately, their tournament came to an end in a 2-1 loss to Swedish-side Torslanda IK 2 in the first knockout round.

The ending may have been tough to take, but Tyus said he learned some important lessons he can carry with him from his time across the pond.

“When you have quality players, that may not have played together on the same team previously, it’s as important to understand each other on a personal level as it is to understand each other’s soccer skills, strengths and weaknesses,” said Tyus, who tallied his second goal of the trip in the win over Måbjerg IF. “Most teams that were at the Gothia Cup had been together for a long time and had developed chemistry over time; we had a very short time to do this. Adapting to everyone’s personalities and soccer traits quickly was absolutely vital to success, aa was being determined to win together and not as individuals.”

Rylie and Tyus not only had many good things to say about their trips—both their experiences on and off the fields—but also about how playing with FFC helped them be better prepared for these great adventures.

Their parents also added some nice thoughts on their experience with FFC and the wonderful chance to travel their children were given this past summer.

Here's a few more highlights from them in Q&A format:

### **What were some of the highlights from being over there both on and off the field?**

**TYUS:** *On the field we made sure to be positive at all times. No one was getting upset for a misplaced pass or shooting when there may have been a better option. We respected each other's ability and understood everyone had good intentions and the same goals. Most of us there didn't play our regular positions that we play on our club soccer teams so it was great to see everyone step up, work together and become a team so quickly. Also, having the other CCL United boys and girls teams cheering us on was amazing. It was like we had been playing together for quite some time.*

**RYLIE:** *I had the time of my life while I was in Germany. I met so many great people while I was in Germany. Playing soccer with German teams and getting to meet the girls after the games and have dinner with them was an experience I will never forget. My favorite highlight on the field was when I scored my first international goal against Viktoria Berlin. I also enjoyed hanging out with my teammates and sightseeing around Dresden and Berlin and singing karaoke on the bus with the coaches. Another one of my favorite thing we did while I was there is when we went to the mall on the very last day. We all bought each other Easter presents since we wouldn't be seeing our families on Easter. I made a lot of great friendships that day. I will never forget this trip.*



### **How do you think playing with your FFC team prepared you for this experience?**

**TYUS:** *My FFC team came close to winning CCL in our age bracket. Being a part of a successful team and showing off my abilities definitely prepared me. I was also a player on our club's Pre-NPSL team playing in the CCL Pro 23 league. Having the opportunity to play alongside and against older and more experienced players definitely added to preparing me for higher level and more physical soccer internationally.*

**RYLIE:** *FFC has intense training and conditioning and a good curriculum. They also provide additional opportunities to the players to improve, like Futsal. I also know with my FFC team, when I go out on the field I have to give 110 percent or I will not get to play. This has trained me to always give my best effort, because I don't want to let my team down.*

### **What was your first thought after you found out you made the team?**

**RYLIE:** *Overall I was very excited, but I was worried about being so far away from my mom. I get a little home sick when I am at tournaments and camps without her. I also was worried about how good the competition was overseas and if I was good enough to compete with the German teams. Once I got to Germany, I felt comfortable and had an amazing time.*

**What was your highlight of the trip?... Both of Tyus on the field and then off the field with any non-soccer related stuff.**

***STACY PRIDDY:** For us it was awesome to watch our son be a part of something he loves so much. Watching your kid play in such a prestigious tournament and compete against kids around the world was incredible. We didn't see Tyus off the field much because he was with the team 24/7, but just knowing he was there experiencing the culture of Denmark and Sweden with teammates and friends was great. In addition, it was incredible to take our two daughters to experience the culture of the two countries and watch their brother teach them what they can be apart of.*

**Is there anything you guys do to help Tyus and Rylie that other parents might find useful?... Like helping him keep a good balance with soccer, school, life, etc., stuff like that.**

***STACY PRIDDY:** As parents our favorite rewards of Tyus playing soccer are watching him push himself to play at his highest level, learning to take risks based on his abilities and managing his nerves in stressful situations. These are traits that will benefit him in the future no matter what happens in his athletic career. Sometimes we need to remind ourselves that no one puts more pressure on him than himself. Competitive athletes don't need anyone, especially us as parents, to add to that. Our job is to be supportive and to remind them to enjoy the journey and experience.*

***KRISTEN WHITE:** As parents we have tried really hard for Rylie to be accountable and responsible for her own soccer career. We encourage her to directly contact her coach with any concerns or issues and discuss it with him before getting us involved. We also encourage her to take risks and to come out of her comfort zone whether it is related to trying out for a new team like ODP, talking to a coach, or playing with teammates that she doesn't know.*

—By Tom Leiss, FFC Social Media / Press / Communications