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*High-resolution player images available upon request

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Independence Advance to Second Consecutive WPS Championship

Philadelphia departs Thursday to battle Western NY for the title on August 27 at 4:00 p.m.

PHILADELPHIA, PA (August 22, 2011) – For the second consecutive season, the Philadelphia Independence will play for a shot at the title in the Women's Professional Soccer (WPS) Championship on August 27 at 4:00 p.m. The Independence earned the right to face WPS Regular Season Champion, the Western NY Flash, in the title match after defeating South Florida's magicJack 2-0 on Saturday at PPL Park in Chester, PA. Tasha Kai and Amy Rodriguez scored goals in front of 5,410 fans at the soccer venue, the largest attendance for an Independence game this season and second most in franchise history. Philadelphia's defense shut down Abby Wambach and the rest of the stacked magicJack roster. Independence goalkeeper, Nicole Barnhart, came up with several big saves en route to her fourth shutout of the season.

"It is a great accomplishment for the club, the players and the fans to go back to the WPS Championship game," said Independence head coach, Paul Riley.

In its inaugural season last year, the Independence surpassed all first-season expectations and advanced to the championship. Philadelphia played two overtime matches in three days in last season's WPS playoff format, and then traveled to the west coast to face San Francisco-based FC Gold Pride in the title match. The Independence fell short in that match 4-0.

"We know we enter the game as the underdogs, but we carried that label for two years in most of our big games," Riley added. "The players are excited to have the opportunity to put last years result to rest. We were extremely tired and never showed our best qualities. The new format will allow us the rest required for a huge game."

For Independence goalkeeper Nicole Barnhart, she is playing in her second consecutive WPS Championship, as well, but this one is a little different. She was a member of FC Gold Pride last season and the starting keeper who shutout the Independence in the final. Barnhart will face several of her former FC Gold Pride teammates in the championship match, including 5-Time FIFA Player of the Year, Marta, Canadian international, Christine Sinclair, Kandace Wilson and Downingtown-native, Becky Edwards, who all signed with the Flash after FC Gold Pride disbanded at the end of last season.

"It is very exciting to be playing in back to back championship matches," said Barnhart. "The goal at the start of the season is to get to the championship game and have the opportunity to win it all, so to achieve that part of the goal is one more step in the right direction. These are the games that are fun, the ones where you are really playing for something, trying to win a title. Last year, I played against Philly in the final, and now I will play for Philly against a lot of my former FC Gold Pride teammates. Based on the style of play and talent on both teams, it should be a really great game and match-up."

Another Independence player who is facing her old squad: the 2011 WPS Michelle Akers Player of the Year, Vero Boquete. Before signing with the WPS last season, Vero was a member of the W-League's Buffalo Flash, the precursor to the Western NY Flash. Vero won a W-League championship with Buffalo and was named the final's MVP.

"For me it will be a special game," said Boquete. "It's a final, so it is already special, but I'm returning to my old team. [Western NY] opened for me the doors of soccer in the USA and because of that I thank them. But now, I am wearing another jersey and the only thing I am thinking about is to win this final."

During the regular season, the Independence defeated the Flash in two out of its three contests. Philadelphia was the first team to defeat first-year Western NY when Danesha Adams scored a stoppage time goal in a 1-0 victory on June 12. The Independence is also the only WPS team to win its regular season series against the Flash. In three matches, the Independence defense has again come up big, allowing just three goals and virtually shutting down 2011 Golden Boot winner, Marta. Her only goal against the Philadelphia defense was a penalty kick on May 29.

"We will spend the entire week preparing a game plan to win the game, not on stopping the potent WNY offense," said Riley of his squad's practice plans this week. "The players have 'unfinished business' to take care of, and we will do everything to make it an entertaining showcase of the best professional clubs and players in the world."

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About the Philadelphia Independence

The Philadelphia Independence is one of six teams playing in the Women's Professional Soccer (WPS) league. The Independence was the WPS Runner Up in 2010, the team's inaugural season. The other WPS teams are: Atlanta Beat, Boston Breakers, New York/New Jersey Sky Blue FC, magicJack, and Western New York Flash. Visit www.wpsphillyindependence.com for more information and order season tickets at www.independencetix.com.