

## MetroWest Maccabi Soccer Wins Gold at JCC Maccabi Games

By Matthew Fox

The JCC MetroWest Boys' Maccabi Soccer Team won the Gold Medal at the 2014 JCC Maccabi Games in Cherry Hill, NJ, going undefeated through all seven games of tournament. The team was also awarded the prestigious Midot Medal by Soccer Commissioner Robert Swartz for exemplifying the values and spirit of the JCC Maccabi Games.

Team MetroWest, comprised of players from North Jersey as well as New York and Connecticut, included: Zach Gollin (Springfield, NJ), Max Kerner (Westchester, NY), Adam Lorimer (Livingston, NJ), Colin Morrissey (Far Hills, NJ), Benjy Robinov (Stamford, CT), Jake Samuels (Livingston, NJ), Zach Steinberg (Parsippany, NJ), Jack Wasserman (Livingston, NJ), and Kevin Zeligson (West Orange, NJ).

Returning four starters from their 2013 Bronze Medal Team, MetroWest came into the tournament determined to improve on their success from the previous year. This was despite the fact that the team lacked a "true" goalkeeper among the nine players on the team. Adam Lorimer and Zach Steinberg deserve a lot of credit for stepping up and agreeing to split time in the goal. In addition, many other players on the team were happy to accept the challenge when asked to play in positions they were unaccustomed to. It was this unselfish, team-first attitude that made this group so special and contributed to their success.

MetroWest opened the tournament against Springfield on Monday morning. The team got started quickly with the opening goal from Jack Wasserman off a long throw in from Jake Samuels in the 2<sup>nd</sup> minute. However even possession and a late first half goal for Springfield found the teams tied 1-1 at the half. MetroWest came out sharper though in the second half, controlling the pace of the game with their possession and cruised to a 5-2 victory. Kevin Zeligson contributed two goals and Wasserman finished the match with one goal and three assists.

	Game 1		Final
<b>MetroWest</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Springfield	1	1	2

**2' - Wasserman (Samuels)**

23' – Springfield

**32' - Gollin (Samuels)**

**35' - Zeligson (Wasserman)**

**41' - Morrissey (Wasserman)**

**44' - Zeligson (Wasserman)**

16' – Springfield

**GKs - Lorimer & Steinberg**

MetroWest's second game on Monday came against Valley (Los Angeles), a very strong team that vies for the Gold Medal every year but has also developed a reputation for arrogance and poor sportsmanship. MetroWest knew they would need to play their best soccer to earn a result against Valley. Their strategy was to control the game by being the more physical team and that's exactly what

they did. MetroWest was rewarded in the 8<sup>th</sup> minute when Kevin Zeligson received a Colin Morrissey long ball in the box, flicked the ball with his head over the charging goalkeeper, and then collected it to easily pass into the open goal. The game was hard fought throughout and played perfectly into the team's strategy. MetroWest continuously turned up the intensity, inspiring their own play while frustrating Valley at the same time. The game remained 1-0 until the 51<sup>st</sup> minute when Morrissey won a tackle near midfield and carried the ball back down past the Valley defense to set up a powerful strike into the net to secure the 2-0 victory. It was the epitome of a team win and it felt good! Exceptional performances by Adam Lorimer, who played the entire game in goal, and the defensive backbone of Morrissey, Jake Samuels, and Zach Steinberg, led to an impressive clean sheet.

Game 2	Final		
Valley	0	0	0
<b>MetroWest</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

**8' - Zeligson (Morrissey)**

**51' - Morrissey**

**GK - Lorimer**

Feeling good and playing great soccer, MetroWest proved to be too much for both their opponents on Tuesday, defeating San Diego 5-0 and Rockland 7-2. Adam Lorimer, Zach Steinberg, and Zach Gollin combined for a second consecutive clean sheet against San Diego and Kevin Zeligson turned in a four goal performance in the Rockland game. Jack Wasserman finished the day with three goals and one assist over the two matches while Benjy Robinov contributed four assists.

Game 3	Final		
<b>MetroWest</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>San Diego</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**12' - Wasserman (Zeligson)**

**18' - Wasserman (Robinov)**

**22' - Samuels (Gollin)**

**30' - Kerner (Robinov)**

**31' - Lorimer (Zeligson)**

**GKs - Lorimer, Steinberg, Gollin**

Game 4	Final		
Rockland	0	2	2
<b>MetroWest</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>

**13' - Gollin (Robinov)**

**21' - Wasserman (Gollin)**

**22' - Zeligson (Wasserman)**

**32' - Zeligson (Robinov)**

40' – Rockland

**49' - Zeligson (Morrissey)**

50' – Morrissey

55' – Rockland

57' - Zeligson

GKs - Steinberg & Gollin

A 4-0 record in the preliminary round earned MetroWest the #1 seed in the medal round of the tournament and a match against the #8 seed Boston on Wednesday. While the #1 seed gave MetroWest a favorable matchup in the quarterfinal, it set up a likely rematch with Valley in the semifinal. Although an admirable opponent, Boston was unable to provide much competition for MetroWest who went on to win 7-1. Jack Wasserman and Max Kerner each turned in a two goal performance.

Quarterfinal	Final		
Boston	1	0	1
<b>MetroWest</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>

2' - Wasserman (Samuels)

8' - Boston

15' - Morrissey (Steinberg)

26' - Steinberg (Lorimer)

32' - Wasserman (Lorimer)

38' - Zeligson (Gollin)

47' - Kerner (Wasserman)

53' - Kerner

GKs - Lorimer, Steinberg, Morrissey

As expected, the semifinal on Thursday morning found MetroWest in a rematch with Valley. MetroWest knew that to win against Valley again, they would need to play even better than they had the first time the two teams met three days earlier. The strategy again was to be the more physical team and control the intensity of the game.

The semifinal got off to a wild start. From the opening kickoff, Valley took the ball straight down the field and scored in the very 1<sup>st</sup> minute. It only took another minute for Zach Gollin to answer right back for MetroWest with a perfectly placed free kick from 25 yards out in the 2<sup>nd</sup>. But Valley kept the pressure on and went up again with another quick goal in the 4<sup>th</sup>. Just a few minutes into the most important game, MetroWest found themselves playing from behind for the first (and second) time all tournament. While many teams might lose their nerve and let the game slip away after a rough start like this, MetroWest had no intentions of letting that happen. The team maintained their confidence and composure. The boys dug deep, maintained their strategy, and once again raised the intensity. Excellent team play led to goals in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> minutes from Jack Wasserman and Gollin and a 3-2 lead at halftime for MetroWest. In the second half the game became even more volatile with tough play from both teams. Valley again started to become frustrated, and not just the players but their fans too. While Valley became distracted by the high intensity of the game, MetroWest kept their cool and used it to their advantage. They were rewarded when Gollin scored again to notch the hat trick in the 44<sup>th</sup> minute. Even though Valley was able to bring the game back within a goal off a free kick in the 58<sup>th</sup>

minute, MetroWest proved they had what it takes to get it done with unrelenting defense and a number of key saves from Adam Lorimer who played the entire game in goal. MetroWest were 4-3 victors when the final whistle blew! This match felt like it had been the championship game for MetroWest. So much energy and emotion had gone into the game; the team had given everything they had. MetroWest would have just a few hours to come down from the emotional win against Valley and prepare to face Springfield in the actual Gold Medal Game.

Semifinal	Final		
Valley	2	1	3
<b>MetroWest</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

1' - Valley

**2' - Gollin**

4' - Valley

**19' - Wasserman (Samuels)**

**21' - Gollin (Steinberg)**

**44' - Gollin (Wasserman)**

58' - Valley

**GK - Lorimer**

MetroWest knew Springfield would be better than the first time the two teams played and they could not underestimate them. They had made it this far for a reason. From the opening kickoff MetroWest dominated possession while Springfield seemed to settle for playing an ultra defensive style with all seven players behind the ball. Their strategy worked well, keeping MetroWest off the board until the 17<sup>th</sup> minute when Jack Wasserman scored with a shot from a perfectly placed pass from Max Kerner. MetroWest led 1-0 at halftime and came out quickly after the break with Kevin Zeligson scoring in the 34<sup>th</sup> minute. Instead of switching to a more offensive formation, Springfield continued to play conservatively and MetroWest continued to be comfortable controlling possession and the flow of the game. Maybe too comfortable though. Just as MetroWest may have started to sense the Gold Medal in grasp, Springfield shocked everyone, capitalizing on their chances with two goals in rapid succession in the 54<sup>th</sup> and 58<sup>th</sup> minutes to tie the game at 2-2 and send it to overtime.

Springfield had all the momentum now going into overtime and MetroWest was understandably dejected. The entire tournament came down to these last 10 minutes. Everything that happened leading up to this point didn't matter now. If MetroWest wanted the Gold, they had to go out and take it. They had to muster up everything they had left and leave it all out on the field.

The first ten minutes of overtime produced no goals. The last ten minutes of overtime produced four! In the 72<sup>nd</sup> minute Zach Gollin scored a great goal to put MetroWest ahead. Springfield answered right back though in the 74<sup>th</sup> to tie it again 3-3. Then in the 77<sup>th</sup> minute Wasserman scored the game and tournament winning goal on an assist from Gollin! Just seconds later Adam Lorimer who had already made some incredible saves late in the game to keep MetroWest alive, sealed the deal when his punt from the goal traveled length of the field and could not be handled by the opposing goalie for the final goal and a 5-3 win for MetroWest! Champions at last!

Gold Medal			OT1	OT2	Final
Springfield	0	2	0	1	3
<b>MetroWest</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>

**17' - Wasserman (Kerner)**

**34' - Zeligson (Wasserman)**

54' – Springfield

58' – Springfield

**72' - Gollin (Samuels)**

74' – Springfield

**77' - Wasserman (Gollin)**

**77' – Lorimer**

GK – Lorimer

MetroWest earned the Gold Medal with a perfect 7-0 record, scoring 35 goals while conceding 11. The young men left the Maccabi Games with the respect and admiration of everyone they encountered; opponents, coaches, referees, and parents and which was acknowledged by being awarded the Midot Medal at the completion of the tournament. Every player on the team should be proud of how they conducted themselves on and off the field and for the manner in which they represented their communities and their families back home!

	Goals	Assists	Points
Jack Wasserman	9	7	16
Kevin Zeligson	9	2	11
Zach Gollin	6	4	10
Colin Morrissey	4	2	6
Jake Samuels	1	5	6
Max Kerner	3	1	4
Adam Lorimer	2	2	4
Benjy Robinov	0	4	4
Zach Steinberg	1	2	3