

York 9 FC sets date for inaugural CPL match



By Jake Courtepatte

The Canadian Premier League is ready for kickoff.

York 9 FC was announced at a Toronto event last week as one of two sides to compete in the League's inaugural match this coming spring, set to face off against Hamilton's Forge FC in a road match on April 27.

The closest rivalry in the seven-team league by geographical proximity, York 9 Manager Jimmy Brennan said the match will take on even more significance.

"It's a bit more special because it's a local derby and we'll have York 9 presence in the stands, but we want to get out there and have a good start to the season and hopefully come away from that game with three points," said Brennan. "It's always exciting, but to kick off the Canadian Premier League and make history makes it a special game for everybody."

Brennan and his executives also announced a special treat for the hundreds who have already booked their seat for the league's historic first season: all season ticket holders will be bussed to and from the game in Hamilton at Tim Hortons Field, to free seats in a special York 9-only section.

"We've had a lot of time to build and once we get that first game underway, the season starts and everything you've worked toward is ready to roll out," said Brennan. "We're looking forward to it being a local derby as well. It's even more special. We're hoping to have a large following out there with our supporters."

Brennan expects around 1,000 supporters to make the journey from York Region to see his team's inaugural match, a roster that has been growing rapidly in recent weeks.

"Once they step out onto the field, they know they've got a job to do. I remember at Toronto FC, our derby was five hours away in Montreal, which is not really a local derby, is it? With the CPL, there's going to be some great derbies around the league, and you'll really get a sense of what a true derby is like."

For those not in the know, a "derby" is a term often used to describe sports fixtures between two local clubs. Around 80 kilometres separate Hamilton from York Region.

The club announced Friday three more Canadian players announced to the roster, in signing forward Michael Cox, goalkeeper Matt Silva, and midfielder Munir Saleh to deals.

"It's getting there," said Brennan when asked about completing his roster. "It's a lot of work, but enjoyable. We're in a unique situation where we've got a blank canvas nowhere else in the world do you get to have this opportunity to build a club, implement a philosophy, and get the players in that you think are going to excel in this league."

The club is now up to over twenty players on the roster, while Brennan believes around three more are yet to be signed.

"We're really excited with the players we've just signed. We know the formation that we want to play, the style that we want to play, and it's just finding the players that suit that model. So far, we've been very fortunate to get the team that we want."

In overseas acquisitions, the club recently signed Japanese midfielder Wataru Murofushi, the second international player acquired for the season and the reigning Player of the Year in Singapore.

Wataru is technically gifted, incredibly exciting to watch, and he's got exactly the right frame of mind to come continue his professional career in Canada," said Manager Jimmy Brennan. "He's explosive and exceptionally quick off the ball. He's going to be a great asset to our club."

With his roster close to completion, Brennan is eager to get his club out onto the field in April.

"You can't scout or watch videos about the opposition. You're more or less focused on your game-plan and how you're going to execute, and as the game starts to fall into place, you've got to make some tactical decisions on the pitch."

"Once you're halfway through the season, you'll understand how teams play and watch videos of them, and tactically you can make decisions beforehand, so this is going to be a tough one: not just for myself but for all the coaches in the league."