

York 9 FC set to kick off inaugural season this weekend

By Jake Courtepatte

For fans of the green
and black, the day is finally here.

York 9 FC is scheduled
to face Hamilton's Forge FC this Saturday, kicking off the inaugural season for
both the club and the Canadian Premier League.

Temperatures are
expected to hang around the ten-degree Celsius range at Hamilton's Tim Hortons
Field on opening day, an unwelcome change of conditions for the fully-rostered
York 9 club, who returned from a conditioning stint in Punta Cana, Dominican
Republic last weekend.

‘It’s nice to get some
sun on the face for the players,’ said York 9 coach Jimmy Brennan. ‘It does
kind of rejuvenate you a bit after being indoors for so long.’

It’s been a whirlwind
April for the club, who unveiled their official kits on April 5, sporting the
nine bright green stripes across the abdominals, representing the nine
municipalities of York Region.

Last week also saw the
league strike a deal with CBC Sports to live broadcast ten of the CPL regular
season games, including Saturday’s opener.

CBC Sports’ Scott
Russell and Andi Petrillo will host CBC’s coverage of the broadcast games.
Commentary will be provided by longtime soccer broadcaster Gareth Wheeler, and
former Canadian international player Terry Dunfield.

Yet, for the York
club, they return to Canada focused solely on what is happening on the field.

‘You’re in an intimate
setting where every day you’re working with your teammates,’ said Brennan. ‘You
start creating bonds where you really get to understand one another.’

Midfielder Joseph Di
Chiara added that the goal was ‘to maximize as much field time as we can,’
after spending time earlier in the preseason at Vaughan’s Ontario Soccer
Centre.

‘When you’re training
at home, it’s not the same as spending 24 hours for ten days straight where

you're eating together?you do everything together.?

The Forge FC squad followed
suit in heading to the Dominican to get in some exhibition games against local
clubs, where Di Chiara said he got a chance to check out his upcoming
competition.

?You try to improve
every day. Then eventually, when that day comes, you're in full flight. If you
look at the big picture and think, 'wow,' you maybe get a little overwhelmed.?

Brennan said he now
has his club focused solely on Saturday's match since returning home.

As for the rest of the
roster, Brennan and his team have finally put to paper the twenty names that
will represent this Nine Stripes this season, including eighteen Canadians.
Those who have been following League1 Ontario play since its inaugural year a
few years back will recognize some friendly faces, including former Aurora FC
players Morey Doner and Simon Adjei, as well as former Vaughan Azzurri
teammates Austin Ricci and Colm Vance.

Over 23,000 are
expected at Tim Hortons Field when the green and black take to the pitch on
Saturday, a sell-out collaboration between the stadium and the league for the
historic day.

The York club will see its first home action on
May 22, when they take on AS Blainville at York Lions Stadium.