

Aurora United stars suit up for Canada



By Jake Courtepatte

Canada soccer is fielding a youthful team to compete at the FIFA Under-20 Women's World Cup in Papua New Guinea later this month, including two up-and-coming stars from the Aurora United program.

Sarah Stratigakis and Lauren Raimondo, both key cogs in the Aurora offense in the team's first League 1 season, will be suiting up against the best in the world after dominating their Ontario adversaries in league play this past summer.

"We know we will be facing some of the best young players in the world, so we are preparing our team to execute a system of play that helps us develop technically under the pressure from world-class talent," said U-20 head coach Danny Worthington in a statement. "We are going to play the way we want to play because it is the right way and it is the right way for Canada."

Stratigakis, no stranger to the world stage, finished second in league scoring this year in the semi-professional League 1, notching nine goals over ten games. Making her debut with the international squad at the age of fourteen in the CONCACAF U-17 Championships in 2013, she helped Canada qualify for the U-20 World Cup with a silver medal finish at the CONCACAF U-20 Championship in Honduras earlier this year.

Raimondo, though a late addition to the Aurora United squad, made quite an impact in her shortened season. The 17-year-old scored four goals in four games in a United uniform.

The chemistry between the two players is nothing new, having worked and trained together in the Canada youth program under coach Bev Priestman since the age of fourteen. Both players represented Canada recently at the U-17 Women's World Cup in Jordan.

They join a list of 21 of the nation's top young athletes, and are the sole representatives of League 1 Ontario.

With the tournament running Nov. 13 - Dec. 3, Canada's group stage has the team facing two Confederation champions. They face space in their opening match, followed by the African champions Nigeria, closing out against the Asian champions Japan.

Canada has reached the knockout stage of the preeminent women's youth football tournament three times, finishing second in the inaugural competition in Canada in 2002, and reaching the quarterfinals in Chile in 2008 and again in Canada in 2014.

Raimondo and Stratigakis have already begun training camp in Australia with the rest of the squad, facing France this weekend in a friendly as a warmup to the tournament.