

Former Toronto FC captain takes helm of AYSC with a vision for growth



By Brock Weir

For over 20 years, Jimmy Brennan made his life playing professional soccer in Canada and Europe, representing his country, winning the 2000 Gold Cup, ultimately becoming the first player and club captain for the fledging Toronto FC Soccer Team, where he remained for seven years.

Now, he aims to impart these experiences to emerging soccer stars ? and kids who just love to play the beautiful game ? as the new Executive Director of the Aurora Youth Soccer Club (AYSC).

Mr. Brennan takes the Club's helm this week, following the announcement of his appointment on Friday.

Bitten early with a love of the game, and playing with Bristol City, Nottingham Forest, Norwich City and Southampton before returning home, he knows firsthand what the kids in the AYSC are going through and comes into the club with a wealth of knowledge and experience not just for them, but the coaches as well.

?I think there are a lot of broken promises you hear,? says Mr. Brennan of some of the primary challenges facing youth today when they step onto the pitch. ?There are a lot of kids who have been fed a false hope. I think a lot of the kids haven't got the necessary training they deserve. We want to bring in every single resource to make everybody better. I think you need guys who have played at a high level, but also have the coaching qualifications because then it is easier to relate to the kids and help them with what they are going through.

?At times they will have little spells when they are not performing and they just don't understand why, but you can help them by [explaining].?

Following his retirement from professional soccer, Mr. Brennan says he was mulling several options. He was always leaning towards becoming involved in ?doing his part? at a local club, but there are many clubs to choose from. Meeting with the AYSC's Spencer Kanen, however, turned his leaning into a full-blown tilt towards the local organization.

?When I spoke to Spencer and [heard] his vision of what he wanted to do and his vision for a local club, I thought it was terrific,? he says. ?The more we started talking and the more the board started talking about the direction they wanted to go and the people they wanted to get in place to take the club forward, it was very appealing to me. I am able to come in and sculpt it, and help drive it forward and be ambitious. A lot of clubs are content with where they are. They don't want to grow. These guys have great business minds and now they want a soccer mind as well to work alongside them.?

For Mr. Kanen, having Mr. Brennan captain the AYSC will not only help raise the profile of the organization within the community and beyond, but also enable them to 'set up direct pathways for our children's futures' towards professional and university level play.

'He will guide the club to advance and produce competitive and successful players and coaches, both on and off the field,' said Mr. Kanen at Friday's announcement. 'Jimmy also knows and understands the challenges for soccer players as he has lived through all the obstacles that the game presents at all ages. He is well-respected in the world of soccer and we are extremely lucky to have an individual giving back to the community by joining our team.'

Added Brennan: 'Not everybody is going to go that path [towards pro and university], but we're going to try and create something special for them and give them every opportunity to succeed. Then there is also the grassroots and they need to continue enjoying the game they play and continue to play the game with a smile on their face.'