

York9 FC preps for historic first meeting with MLS squad

By Jake Courtepatte

The milestones just keep coming in the short history of the York9 FC: yet none have been greater than the challenge that awaits the club on Wednesday night at York Lions Stadium.

For the first time in franchise history, the Canadian Premier League club kicks off against a Major League Soccer foe, in an attempt to slay the giant that is the Montreal Impact in the Canadian Championship ladder.

‘It’s been a heck of a ride,’ said York9 FC midfielder Ryan Telfer.

The York Region club got through both Quebec’s A.S. Blainville and Edmonton FC to reach the third round of the Canadian Championship tournament, the first round to feature MLS clubs, including the Impact who earned a bye on the ladder. A surprise win against the Montreal club could set up a date with the powerhouse Vancouver Whitecaps of the MLS in the penultimate round.

‘Finally, to have a CPL team playing against an MLS team, for me and the rest of the guys we’re very excited,’ said Telfer. ‘To be able to display our talents and see how we match up against an MLS team.’

The historic meeting will be the second major milestone the York squad will have set in the inaugural season of the CPL: apart from being the first CPL team to take on an MLS opponent, York also kicked off the first-ever league game against Hamilton’s Forge FC in May.

Yet Telfer sees the upcoming challenge as a historic opportunity to set a precedent for the budding league.

‘We really want to showcase what this league is all about,’ said Telfer. ‘And how we match up against those other opponents. This is going to be a different level of intensity; this is not going to be a regular CPL game, this is going to be against higher tier opponents, and these guys are not ones to be pushed around.’

The Impact’s mark on the highest level of North American soccer has been a positive one since it entered the league in 2012: Montreal became the first Canadian team to advance

to the CONCACAF final in 2015, and were runners-up in the Canadian Championship two seasons ago.

‘It’s exciting,’ said York9 coach Jimmy Brennan. ‘It’s great for the game. Our guys are really looking forward to playing against a historic club that has been around a long time.

‘(Montreal) have done a wonderful job building the stadium, building the club to where it is today. We hope to get there one day too with York9. It’s a wonderful opportunity. They’re a very organized team, and they’ve got a lot of good players. They’ll want to win. It’s going to be a good footballing match. Both teams want to play. You hope it’s not one of those where we cancel each other out, you hope it’s free flowing and a great game for the spectators.’

Brennan downplayed the challenge of facing off against one of North America’s top teams, calling the contest just ‘another match.’

‘Another game that we want to get at, want to dominate, want to win. We’ve got our eyes set on two things this season: Get to the CPL final and win the Voyageurs Cup, and go as far as we can.

‘Those are our goals. It doesn’t matter who we’re playing against. The whole David vs. Goliath thing doesn’t affect us any way whatsoever.’

For Telfer, who admitted his team is considered the underdog in the historic match, it’s all about the mental aspect if his squad is going to stand a chance.

‘We just need to go in there with a mentality that we have nothing to lose, and that we really want to prove ourselves to this team and to the whole nation. I’m very excited to be here.’