

Aurora United Football Club hosts friendly with Peruvian Pan Am team



By Jake Courtepatte

As Brazil and Panama battled it out for Pan American bronze in Hamilton on Saturday, Aurora got its own taste of Pan Am competition.

The Peruvian U22 team, fresh off blanking Canada in their final match of the Pan Am Games, was at Aurora's Highland Park to take on the town's respective U22 squad, the Aurora United Football Club (AUFC).

The international friendly was the result of 'pulling a lot of strings' by AYSC Executive Director Jimmy Brennan, a big move by the soccer veteran in his first year on the job. Brennan pulled on the Canadian kit fifty times over his sixteen year career.

'It's great to have international soccer come to the Town of Aurora,' the Newmarket native said before the event. 'With the relationships I've made throughout my career, it is essential that I utilize these partnerships to benefit our Club. It's important that our young players come out and watch and it is exciting that we will have a bit of 'Pan Am' flavour in our backyard.'

It was a friend of his from the international soccer scene that reached out with the opportunity, asking Brennan if he would like to be involved in a friendly match with the Peruvian team before they headed home. After some quick arrangements with the Aurora Soccer Club to make use of their clubhouse and facilities, the game was on, and the crowd came out in droves.

The young Peruvians proved tough from the opening touch. They held most of the possession in the first half, earning some 'oohs and ahs' from the crowd with their nice volleys and soft touches. A rocket off the crossbar and down to make it 2 - 0 before the half drew an especially big reaction.

'These kids are very good!' said Ben Steenhorst of the Aurora Soccer Club, and 2014 Aurora Sports Hall of Fame inductee who came out for the match.

To the delight of the crowd, it was the Aurora squad that came out pressing in the second half, with Niklas Bauer sending a header off a corner kick just over the woodwork. But it was the Peruvians who kept finding the back of the net, not by any fault of United keeper Pedram Ahmadpour, who made some wild diving saves across the goal mouth in the match. Peru cruised to an eventual 5 - 0 victory.

Andrew Fearman had perhaps the best moment of the match for AUFC late in the game, a free kick that curled around the line of Peruvians only to hit the bar and go high over the net.

But the team was all smiles as they shook the hands of their Peruvian counterparts and headed to the clubhouse, where a post-game reception took place.

?What a great opportunity for our guys,? said coach Tony Greco. ?Anytime you get an opportunity like this, it's about more than just the score, it's the experience.?

Brennan had just stepped into the executive position two months before AUFC took to the field for the first time ever this May, and under the leadership of Greco, coach Bobby Ghiravanian, and AYSC technical director Dave Diplacido, the team has immediately flourished. The AUFC currently leads the Central Division of the Ontario Soccer League (OSL) with a record of 6-1-1.

The AUFC play their home games Mondays in August at 9 p.m. at St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School.