

Breakfast of Champions Spotlight: Spectrum Baton



By Jen Meron

The Aurora Stingers U11 Girls Soccer Team has taken their winning ways to the next level, recently bringing home the Schwan's USA Cup gold division championship title all the way from Blaine, Minnesota.

Head coach Matt Rosati said the Schwan's USA Cup title is the largest youth tournament in the Western Hemisphere, making it no small feat for the Aurora squad.

"They were in awe as soon as they got there," said Rosati. "Just the fact that it took so long to get there I think made them feel like this was a big deal and it was. This was no ordinary tournament. It was really world class."

This year the tournament had over 1,000 participants from 17 US states and 17 countries, including 11 teams proudly representing Ontario.

The Stingers had to beat some formidable competition, defeating six Minnesota teams en route to the title.

The girls collected wins against Lakes United FC Pumas, Blaine dynamite home team and WBL Black in round robin play, before moving onto the quarter finals against the Dakota Rev Sirens. A win there put them in the semi-finals against the North Metro Comets. A win against the Comets vaulted them into the finals, where they were victorious against the Orono Thunder.

Winning all six of their games, the team managed to score an incredible 30 goals and allowed only three.

Coach Rosati, who had been coaching the same group for a few years, said he knew his team had it in them all along.

"We've been fairly dominant since they first started playing at eight year old. They've always been a high-skilled team."

But the coach added that it is not so much about the wins for his team, explaining that the experience itself was the biggest part of the tournament.

"The way I like to put it is, you learn about the culture of the sport. It's not the same when you just go to a tournament and leave," he said.

"There was big time interaction with so many different people and I have to say our players probably learned more about the culture of the sport in the one week that we were down there than they probably had in the four years being in Canada."

Aside from the games, Rosati said the girls really enjoyed the opening ceremonies and trading pins and getting to know all the other teams.

?I think that meeting all those different people was something they really looked forward to a lot,? he said. ?It was so good for them. I knew it was something different and I knew it would mean more to them.?

The team still has a big chunk of their season to play here at home in Ontario, but Rosati said the Schwan's tournament has definitely been a highlight.

?Our team has done so well in the past four years,? he said. ?They deserved a memorable soccer experience. To say I was proud is an understatement. Winning it all was a bonus to the whole experience, but I would be lying if I said I didn't enjoy it.?