

Watch Party attendees witness history in Canada's 1-1 draw with Bosnia and Herzegovina



World Cup soccer fever manifested itself at a number of Watch Party sites around Aurora on Friday afternoon.

One of the hotspots for viewing was in south Aurora where more than fifty red-and-white-clad, avid footie fans gathered at the Aurora Soccer Club to cheer the Canadian side to victory over Bosnia and Herzegovina at BMO Toronto Stadium.

Despite the group's most ardent efforts to push good vibes all the way from Aurora to the shores of Lake Ontario, the Canadian side needed a dramatic late goal to salvage a 1-1 draw with the visitors from Bosnia and Herzegovina?currently #64 in the FIFA rankings. Comparatively, Canada's national men's squad is ranked 30th.

Aurora's Alistair Johnston, who played all 90 minutes and is a cornerstone in the team's starting lineup, got the first shot on goal for Team Canada eleven minutes into the national team's first World Cup game on home turf, but adversity struck early for the Canadian side on the steamy Lakeshore Boulevard pitch.

Alas, 21 minutes in, Jovo Lukic put the white-and-blue-clad Bosnian-Herzegovinan squad ahead 1-0 when he notched his first international goal?much to the chagrin of the spirited ASC gathering.

As the first half wound down, narrow misses in the box by Canada's forwards elicited groans of disbelief from the seasoned soccer aficionados.

The scoring opportunities squandered by the men's national team magnified the national men's World Cup record which is ?unblemished by victory? at 0-6-0 ? based on three games played in 1986 in Mexico and three games played in 2022 in Qatar.

Despite these woeful, far-flung World Cup results, hope sprung eternal in the second half as a pressing Canadian team created far more scoring opportunities than their East European opponents.

At 52:52, Cyle Larin, the second-leading scorer in the history of the Canadian men's national program, but demoted to a second-half substitute, narrowly missed tying the game in the 76th minute when a Bosnian-Herzegovinan defender stopped the red-jerseyed veteran's shot on the goal-line and deflected it off the bar and out of harm's way.

The ASC crowd could not believe Canada's bad luck in the box.

However, Larin elevated himself to folk hero status in the 79th minute of play when he picked the lower corner, on a deft deflection off a Bosnian-Herzegovinan defender, and tied the game with a 20-foot blast.

It was the first national men's team World Cup goal scored on Canadian soil and only the second in history.

Larin's marker caused the ASC to erupt in celebration and my pint of ice-cold Tennant's tasted even better as we savored and toasted an historic goal by the red and white side.

Tying the team that eliminated Team Italy from the World Cup is a feather in the Canadian team's cap and earned the national squad a valuable point in the opening round standings ahead of their looming matches versus Qatar on June 18 and Switzerland on June 24.

Amid the excitement and with all the club's tables filled with happy customers, ASC President Martin Ambrose described the best part of the matinee gathering: "It's the camaraderie. We have such a mixed range of national backgrounds here today. We've got people born in Italy, Ireland, England, Scotland, Iran, India, Trinidad, and Ecuador and a number of Canadian-born members and many young people born here that are enjoying the game and history. It's a true reflection of the community that's what the World Cup is all about bringing the world together and it's fantastic to see that here today."

As the match finished in a 1-1 draw, one insightful fan, after finishing his round of applause, offered a succinct summation of the match from Canada's perspective: "Well, that's better than a loss."

Team Canada takes on 56th-ranked Qatar on Thursday in Vancouver at 6 p.m. EDT and completes the Group Stage by challenging 19th-ranked Switzerland on Wednesday, June 24 in Vancouver at 3 p.m. EDT.

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