

Coach's Corner by Roger Mendes

Junior Pioneers U14 Boys – Arlington Invitational Tournament Review

March 10, 2010: This tournament was very beneficial not only because we brought home the title but because it allowed us to come together as a team like never before. In the drive down and also in the first night in the hotel I was seeing a lot what I saw all last year: clicks. Since last June, I have been stressing to this team the importance of coming together as a whole but have not really seen it happen until this weekend.

Talent is only a prerequisite for success, if you look at the top footballers; playing ability among many of them is very even. We can't train more than we do, either. We're already at the maximum that players can take nowadays. So it is mental differences that will decide who the real winners are. (Sven-Goran Eriksson on Soccer, 2000)

This is the quote I read to the team Saturday morning at our team breakfast adding also that once we mold together as one, it would be the most drastic thing we could do towards the goal to success.

The team did just that on this weekend. We started off in Game 1 against Arsenal FC, 6th ranked team in Pennsylvania West, 2009's State Finalist and also 2008's State Champion. It was a very evenly played game with both teams very organized. However, our midfield and defense were strong and our offense was inspired. We won 3-1 with two goals from Jeff Danek, a goal and two assists from Alex Davidson and an assist from David Serafino. Coach's Award goes to Alex Davidson in this game for being involved in all three goals and also for an all around great effort.

In Game 2 against the home side of this tournament, Arlington Suprema Inferno, the style was completely different then our first opponent. Arlington came out with a very well trained long ball to their very fast forwards. But like our first game, our midfield put great pressure on the opponent and our defense, led by Daniel Matias was very well organized and able to neutralize the home side's attack. That and Jeff Danek's hot foot helped the team cruise to a 5-1 win and clinch a spot in the tournament final. Assists came from Daniel Matias with two, Adam Goncalves, David Serafino and Alex Davidson. Coach's Award goes to Jeff Danek for his notable five goals.

Game 3 was against another very strong opponent of which I was hoping to be a good warm-up to the final. The game was against Freestate Real, currently the 4th ranked team of Maryland, and the match was much more physical then I would have liked for a "warm up." Maybe because our team was thinking ahead towards the final that this game was not our strongest, however, we still came out of it with a semi-positive result

of 2-2. Goals were scored by Jeff Danek and Alex Davidson. Jeff also had an assist while Kyle Mutti recorded the other. Coach's Award goes to Kyle Mutti for a good effort in both midfield and defense.

The championship game against PWSI Courage, currently the 5th ranked team in Virginia, started well for us with a goal from Jeff Danek in only the 2nd minute. The pass came from Alex Davidson. But things quickly turned negative when the same Alex Davidson was unfairly ejected from the game in the minutes following. Nevertheless, it was at this point in the tournament that I really saw our team come together. We rallied, playing a man down, and were more organized defensively then I have ever seen any team at this age level and it really made me proud to watch. Only a sublime individual effort and shot from a PWSI player was able to slip a goal by our coordination. That goal, however, only made us want it more and we were able to get our lead back with yet another goal from Jeff Danek with the assist coming from Daniel Matias. 2-1 was the final with the Coach's Award going to Beraa Ibas who was a force in midfield by eliminating any and all options the opponent could come up with.

Overall this was a great tournament and more importantly a great team building event. Thank you to my players, parents and to Arlington.

Arlington Spring Invitational 2010						
Schedule and Results:						
<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Phase</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Opponent</u>	<u>W-L-T</u>	<u>Result</u>
3/6/2010	Arlington Invitational Tournament	Group	Neutral	Arsenal FC U14B (PA)	Win	3-1
3/6/2010	Arlington Invitational Tournament	Group	Away	Arlington Suprema Inferno U14B (VA)	Win	5-1
3/7/2010	Arlington Invitational Tournament	Group	Neutral	Freestate Real U14B (MD)	Tie	2-2
3/7/2010	Arlington Invitational Tournament	Final	Neutral	PWSI Courage Red U14B (VA)	Win	2-1
<i>3 Wins / 0 Losses / 1 Tie</i>						
<i>12 Goals For / 5 Goals Against</i>						