

Sports

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Caps pushing high-end talent

Soccer academy flourishing

KEVIN MITCHELL

Sports Editor

Everything is done at game tempo. The players never stop moving and seemingly never tire in pursuit of the ball. These teens are in shape as David Broadhurst pushes them towards excellence.

It's another regular mid-week training session at VantageOne Soccer Centre and the Thompson Okanagan FC Under 17 boys are preparing for a playoff match in the EA Sports B.C. Premier Soccer League.

Broadhurst is head coach of the Vancouver Whitecaps Okanagan Academy Centre and led the TOFC boys to the provincial final in the fall league. They lost 3-1 in extra time to Coquitlam Metro Ford at Trillium Fields in Vancouver to finish a stellar season.

"The fall season is a short season with only six regular-season games before the playoffs," said Broadhurst. "As we are a new squad, I was extremely pleased with how quickly the boys came together and took to our style of play and playing philosophy.

"We are playing in the '98 age group yet we only have three players actually born in '98. Most of the squad are '99-born players but we also have three 2000-born. The fact that we have such a young squad made making the BC SPL final even more special for us and it certainly bodes well for the future of this team.

"The boys display a togetherness and a hunger to keep developing and improving. This comes across in the intensity that they train with which then transfers positively into their games."

There were six Vernon players on TOFC with all six having vital roles in the team's success.

"Owen Miller had a very solid fall season putting in very consistent performances at the heart of the defence with Scott Cramer really developing into a crucial holding mid-field role. Going forward, Connor Glennon, Nick Klymchuk, Malcolm Wiens and Jared Quibell all contributed by scoring a number of goals and providing a high number of assists for the team.

"Overall I would say our speed of transition from defence to attack is one of the

major strengths to come out of the fall season."

Both the Thompson Okanagan FC's U17 and U14 Boys participated in the finals, the first time TOFC has had teams make it that far in what has been the club's most successful season to date. A total of four TOFC teams played in the semifinals, with the two boys teams winning and moving to the final.

U17 boys keeper Nick Reitsma of Kelowna stopped a penalty kick in the eighth minute of the final. Reitsma just signed a scholarship with the UBC Okanagan Heat.

Reitsma, who attends Aberdeen Hall Prep School in Kelowna, is also a real citizen of the world. Before landing in Kelowna, he was born in Calgary, then moved to Egypt, then Holland, then Houston, Texas. During his eight years in Houston, Reitsma played for the Houston Dynamo Pre-Academy, and was a member of the regional U.S. National Team Training Camps.

Glennon was instrumental in midfield for TOFC.

Wiens is a right winger who holds the ball well and scores lots. Broadhurst has taught him well how to use his speed for offensive chances.

"Dave also helps me with things I don't do very well like keeping the ball in tight areas when there's lots of pressure on me," said Wiens, who turned 16 in November. "When I play central striker, I have to shield the ball away from the central fullbacks."

Klymchuk patrols the left wing and has been coached by Broadhurst since U11 Development Rep soccer.

"Dave has really helped me work on my confidence as a player, not just the technical skills like dribbling, passing and shooting," said Klymchuk.



LISA MAZUREK/MORNING STAR

Okanagan FC Whitecaps Soccer Academy Centre head coach David Broadhurst shouts encouragement as Nick Klymchuk retrieves balls; Malcolm Wiens controls the ball in a U17 drill at VantageOne Soccer Centre.

"I've got a lot from him with those, but he's also helped me with the knowledge of the game, your position and your role. A lot of it is the mental game, how to play as a team, how to work as a team and how to recover from losses."

Klymchuk said the U17s showed major improvement over the season. The Seaton Grade 12 student is, like most of his teammates, hoping for a college scholarship.

Quibell, a Grade 11 Seaton student, loves to score and is high on Broadhurst.

"He demands excellence. He's fair, but he knows when to be tough and he knows what he's talking about," said Quibell, an Arsenal fan.

There are 165 kids on the TOFC sides with 36 hailing from Vernon. Last year, 85 players within the premier league received scholarships.

TOFC GM and keeper coach Kai Tolpinrud notes that the premier league is the recognized pathway to the Provincial Development Program with the Whitecaps looking to the circuit as a primary source of talent for their programming.

The TOFC teams go through winter training on weekends from Jan. 9 through Feb. 28. Some TOFC players see time training with the Whitecaps Pre-Residency Team in Vancouver.

The Major League Soccer Whitecaps run 10 centers in 14 different cities, and the powers that be view it as the early implementation of their long-term strategy.

"The academy centers are something that we are proud of," said Whitecaps' president Bob Lenarduzzi. "As time goes on, I think we'll be even prouder, and we intend to have our footprint all over Canada."



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