

Concord SC – Girls' Under 12 Kanga Cup Campaign 2010

Sunday, 4th July dawned early for our Kanga Cup campaigners. We had business to take care of here in Sydney before our wild Canberran adventure could really begin - a match to play at Queen Elizabeth Park, 9am with Russell Lea. The excitement almost got the better of our team, as Russell Lea scored the opening goal. With this nice wake up call, the girls in their usual professional style made short work of the Russell Lea team winning 8-1. It was on this high that we left the familiar air of the Inner West to travel into the unknown world of Canberra and the now twenty-year old competition – The Kanga Cup.

Our road trip was quick and with a Macca's stop later, we were at the AIS Arena for the opening ceremony. We were greeted by hordes of seasoned campaigners; enormous sized teams of all ages and an ocean of colours...were we cut out for this? Could our girls make it? All that was yet to be seen. Teams came from as far a field as South Korea and New Zealand and the girls had the pleasure of viewing traditional singing from the Korean group and of course the Haka from our NZ neighbours.

Day 1 of the Comp saw Concord face off with the STFA Strikers from Goulbourn at the University of Canberra. They were a tough group not quite twice our size but close, with an aggressive air about them. But like so many of our devoted supporters said: "The bigger they are the greater they fall". Our girls rose to the game presented to them and dominated play for the majority of the match. We were fast, as aggressive if not stronger than our bigger counterparts and we played like we've never played before. Heartbreaking was that the girls didn't manage to convert their brilliant efforts to a score on the board, but ultimately it was pleasing to not let size govern play – the girls let their heads and feet do the talking and now we were conditioned for the rest of what was to come, with a nil all result to be proud of.

Day 2 was our only afternoon match. The team agreed to a friendly with Maccabi Dragons in the morning for light training. They beat our girls 8-0 and some boasting off the field assisted in setting up a grudge match later in the week to end all grudge matches. The weather that was lovely and warm on the first day turned on us – raining most of the night and drizzling in the morning made the games a minefield of quagmires to navigate. Our intrepid team did not allow this to be an obstacle...and after a promise by their coach, it turned into an adventure and fun to be wading in mud up to their ankles. Game 2 was with a local team – the Belnorth White Spurs – undefeated since the beginning of the season, it was going to be tough.

With the clouds looming, the icy breeze on our team's backs, they began. They mostly found a way around the mud and if they couldn't go round, they just powered through it, notwithstanding the depth of the bogs and that the ball would stop dead in its tracks, they scored two goals – first a screamer by Martina Comastri in the first half and then another beautiful mid-air cross shot by Mahalia Lum following a powerful corner kick by Monica Ward. Their coach, Andrea Comastri, had promised a slide in the mud if they won and that was what he and manager, Michael Richardson delivered when the final whistle blew on our 2-0 victory. The girls strode off the field bigger than when they went on – covered from head to toe in the glory of a battle powerfully fought by all.

Day 3 dawned and Concord SC girls' match with Woden Valley White Spurs was where the posse of supporters was heading. This match promised to be as difficult as the rest, maybe tougher, as the girls were now battle weary from being away from home and having played such arduous matches prior. Nonetheless, they were fixed on their mission. A fantastic display of teamwork, with great quality passing by solid midfielders Angelica Miracola, Chloe Blancato and Megan Gock. Together they allowed wings Alexandra Richardson and Martina Comastri to put their running skills on display and forwards Alana Giardina and Mahalia Lum to be very dangerous near the goal. A lot of excellent running, passing and calling later,

Martina Comastri scored two goals one in the first half and then again in the second half to make a neat 2-0 result and steering us to another much celebrated win. We were through to the qualifying finals. Could we keep up this momentum?

Day 4 and qualifying finals at last. The girls had back-to-back games to play against incredibly tough competitors – first Northbridge FC (a slick, professionally trained side) and our final game with Maccabi Dragons. As valiantly as our girls tried with our Northbridge opponents the Northbridge girls managed to steal a win 4-0 in our morning match. Notwithstanding the loss, the girls held their heads high, as our grudge match was to come.

A slurp of water, some fruit and only THIRTY minutes rest and the next full match was upon our Concord girls with a team that had not yet played that day, had beaten us 3-1 in the State Cup, beaten us 8-0 in a friendly early on in the week and boasted of being able to beat us with their rep selected team any time...it was going to be on for young and old. The whistle blew and they were off. To say how gloriously they defended and fought that game would be understating the sheer guts our girls showed the opposition. Defenders Julia Lancuba, Jocelyn Nasr, Monica Ward and Georgia O'Keefe, with the support of the entire team, thwarted every effort made by this fresh-legged Maccabi side. And to complete the mighty effort of our outstanding defence we all witnessed a smashingly good effort by the best goalkeeper in the universe – Mikayla Cecere. There was pushing, pulling, shoving and scratching and sneaky time wasting tactics by the opposing team, but our girls held on not showing a speck of fatigue nor care for the tactics of their foe. Nil all was the score for the first half. In the second half, almost as the whistle blew to start, Maccabi scored and there was a tremor on the sidelines that this was the end of our fearless girls. We were wrong. If anything the goal spurred our girls on to battle fiercely and in the final minutes our pure efforts were rewarded with a fantastic goal by Chloe Blancato. The Earth shook with the sound of celebration for a well deserved 1-1 draw. And thus ended Concord girls' under 12s campaign.

Maybe we didn't get into the grand final, but the girls gained much more than that – they became a well oiled machine, they learnt to dig deep and go beyond their limits, they developed trust in one another and forged friendships that will last a life-time and now they will be unleashed on the rest of this season. If they can keep up this momentum, their opponents have something to worry about.

Who were these heroes who left an indelible mark on the Kanga Cup and bought glory to our club's name?

Chloe Blancato
Mikayla Cecere
Martina Comastri
Alana Giardina
Megan Gock
Julia Lancuba

Mahalia Lum
Angelica Miracola
Jocelyn Nasr
Giorgia O'Keefe
Alexandra Richardson
Monica Ward

Coach: Andrea 'Mudslide' Comastri
Manager: Michael 'Sludgeskate' Richardson

Three cheers for them all. You did us proud girls!