

Puget Sound Rolling Thunder

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Rolling Thunder In Vancouver Power Soccer Provincial Tournament

By Cliff Huling

On June 24th the Tacoma Rolling Thunder Players, Coaches, and their respective families, made way for Surrey, BC, Canada, Just across the US-Canadian border, and Southeast of Vancouver, BC. The Vancouver Provincial Tournament would begin the next morning. The tournament is used to determine the Vancouver teams that would go on to the Canadian National Power Soccer Tournament.. It consists of two separate Divisions and it would be the Second Division in which the Rolling Thunder would participate. The Second Division was made up of 5 teams with all teams playing the other in the group. "I just want to be competitive, be intense,

because the Canadians are in [the tournament] for seeding." remarked player Jon Porter when asked of his expectations for this year's tournament, "I want things to be different (referring to last years 0-2-1 result) I think we will be more familiarized and we've had a year to build trust in each other." The year before scoring goals was a high task for the Rolling Thunder, with the highlight being a late goal to eek out a draw and the team's only points. The Rolling Thunder have been going to Vancouver since 2007 and the Vancouver-Area teams have many more competitions and, more importantly, many more practice hours. Meeting every 1st and 3rd Monday most every month,



Jon Porter anticipating the start of the first game

Coach Kirk Westrick cherishes the few opportunities the team gets to compete against other teams rather than intersquad scrimmages. Players last year left disappointed but hopeful, "I think [the players] got a better idea of the kind of things we needed to better ourselves in, possessing the ball, and capitalizing on the few opportunities the game often can have" said Coach Westrick.

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Minutes before the first game the five players (from left to right) Jon Porter, Cliff Huling, Patrick Carpenter, Kirk Westrick, Macy Westrick, and Tom Bungert crowd around to get any last coaching

1st Game Nanaimo 2

The team didn't know what to expect, Tacoma Rolling Thunder's next nearest Power Soccer team was in Canada. The first game began and the first few minutes were all in the defensive half for Tacoma. A spot kick early on only 15 feet from goal had the Rolling Thunder reeling back to last year's results. It was taken, and went in, the team's hopes quickly vanishing... "No Goal." The ref shouted. It was an indirect kick, and the ball never touched a second player, visibly relieved, the Rolling Thunder woke up. Nanaimo would see little of the ball again for the rest of the game. 4 minutes in, Goal, Tacoma. Then they really rained in, The

first was followed by 2 in the next minute. This was new territory. The game reached halftime, 20 minutes later, 6-0, Rolling Thunder, eclipsing the entire total of goals from the last two tournaments. In only one half of one game. The game would finish 10-0. None of the players dared think ahead, the parents and volunteers, however, could do it for them. "It was great to see them last year get to play other teams, regardless what the results were. But this, is really fun to see." Said one parent. The support was felt by all the players during the game. Specifically, that of Marlo Thompson, the Founder of Puget Sound Power Soccer League. Marlo does not



follow any sports, but this team and the players' love of the game brings smiles and laughs you can hear across the entire gym, during every practice, and double when her players show their full potential, against other teams. So far, this trip up was bringing smiles to everyone's faces, this was going to be fun.



2nd Game Nanaimo 1 (0-1-0)

After a couple hours rest, and charge in chairs, Tacoma Rolling Thunder looked to continue on. No one was sure if the previous game had been a true signal of things to come, and no one wanted to be overtaken by complacency. With that, they took the court in hopes of start-

ing differently than the first game. The play did reflect the mentality, mostly in possession, in the attacking half of the court. An early goal in the first run of play eased few tensions. As the game continued, however, the goal became, shutout, rather than just win. Strategically, it was decided during this game that we

would have the same goaltender the rest of the tournament. Armed with his black skull and cross-bones do rag, Patrick Carpenter [pictured left] took to holding zero on the board. He did just that, this game went even better. 16-0. That's 26 goals for, 0 against. The players still couldn't be quite sure that this was their tournament to lose.

3rd Game Greater Vancouver (1-1-0)

The 3rd game would be the last game of the day, following lunch (and another quick charge) the team gathered around Coach Westrick for a few last words. Coach Westrick maintains that the 3rd, and last game of the first day is always the toughest. Players are stretched and chairs are

more sluggish. He worries the momentum could be lost at the most crucial time, with players growing tired. True to form, the game began as a tough, defensive struggle. At half the Rolling Thunder had a slim and hard-won 2-0 lead. As usual, Patrick Carpenter snuffed out the few chances Vancouver had on goal. As the 2nd half began an early goal helped with tired players. The effect was present, but seemed to be wearing on Greater



Vancouver a little harder. A couple of defensive lapses helped seal the deal and assure a 100% record through day 1. 5-0 Tacoma. With help from Kyle Tuohy [pictured left with Kirk Westrick], who assists Kirk and the team at practices and made the trip as assistant coach, figured out that, regardless of what the last group stage game brought, a spot in the Final was already theirs. Ending the day 3-0-0 with a +31 goal difference, the Tacoma Rolling Thunder could finish no worse than Silver.

4th Game North Shore (2-0-1)



Macy Westrick on the ball, looks for a lane.

After successfully capturing a semi-final bye, and a night's rest the Rolling Thunder looked to use this game a possible Final scouting opportunity. Tacoma would no longer be able to surprise anyone, though, as everyone had either heard or seen the previous games' score lines. That was no different with North Shore, they

would employ near complete defensive game plan. This game began much the same way as the 1st game had, Tacoma held the vast majority of possession and were mostly in the attacking half. The only difference, this team wasn't letting the ball in. As halftime approached the team was desperately trying to maintain momentum. 0 - 0 at the half. Coach Kirk Westrick stressed maintaining the pressure and not getting beat on any potential countering goal. 'Possession, and capitalizing on opportunities.' The players' stayed with it, drive after drive of working the ball up the flanks trying to get any kind of through ball to the other

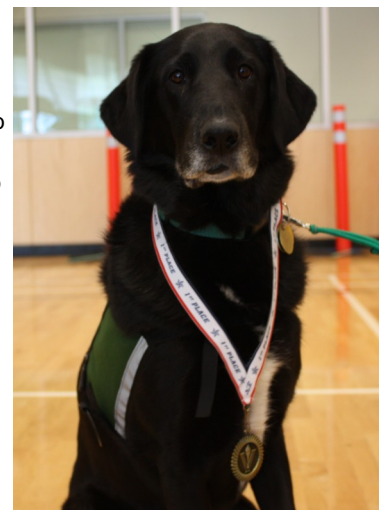
side only to have to recoup and try again. Brilliantly scouted by North Shore, as they played for the draw. This, it seemed, was most likely the Gold-Medal matchup. The clock ticked quicker to the Tacoma players, as their gazes checked the time remaining between play. 35 minutes in, still 0 - 0, only 4 minutes left to break the stalemate. In the 36th minute the play was logged in the North Shore goal box, pinned between Rolling Thunder player on the right side of the box and the two defenders desperate to hold the score. As the struggle continued the ball finally became free by Tom Bungert, and rolled parallel across the goal mouth to the waiting player, Cliff Huling. A simple tap and Tacoma had done it. 1 - 0, late in the game. A final few minutes of watching the clock tick off, the Championship next.

Division-II Championship

After the previous game, North Shore would have to play Greater Vancouver for the opportunity to play for Gold. The Rolling Thunder watched the game with confidence. It was another total defensive battle, 1 - 1 very late. Extra time would be needed to find out who the opponent would be.

With almost nothing left but a penalty shootout, North Shore broke through, scoring with less than 30 seconds to play, the rematch was on. The Tacoma players had something for this game that wasn't offered the last time, they now knew that playing smart, and

staying attacking, they would eventually break through. Luckily they didn't need to wait 36 minutes for a goal, this time, just into the second half they broke through. Now North Shore had no choice but to break out of their total defense, it didn't do any good to not give up a goal now. The game opened up, with back and forth play, which the lone American team hadn't had much of during the course of the tournament. Another goal late, finished the deal. Now Tacoma



The Scoreboard after the Gold-Medal Game



slowed the game, coaxing the clock to go quicker. 2 - 0, final. The Tacoma Rolling Thunder were perfect, 5-0-0 Gold Medal Champions. Division II would not see Tacoma next year, that could be certain.



We're Online!
Rollingthundr.org

About Puget Sound Power Soccer League

The Puget Sound Power Soccer League was founded in 2005 by Marlo and David Thompson. While the goal was, and still is, to have several teams in the surrounding area, the Rolling Thunder, based in Tacoma, remains the only team in Washington. When the team began meeting in 2005, 3-4 players was the typical turn out. Through word of mouth, attending clinics and camps, the number of players has grown significantly. The Rolling Thunder currently has about 15 active participants, which is enough to field three teams.

One of the biggest reasons that the Rolling Thunder team is flourishing is because of our "support staff." In addition to the Thompsons, the team has been supported by Dave and Cathy Griffith, Pete Spraw, and our coach, Kirk Westrick. These people have put in countless hours building up the program, and the team would have floundered long ago had it not been for their dedication. Kyle and John Tuohy have also recently become involved, and are a great fit to the group.

According to Coach Kirk Westrick, "Power Soccer is an awesome sport, but it's much more than just playing and competing. The camaraderie, learning to be a good teammate, being able to network with others in similar situations, developing friendships is what it's all about. For the players, coaches, families, helpers ... this is our TEAM."

How They Got Here

The Rolling Thunder players have sold 'World's Finest Chocolate' to raise money for uniforms and travel expenses, and also rely on donations. We definitely want to thank the Northwest Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America for their generous contribution this year, as well as previous years. **Thank you NWPVA!**

