

Toronto Idolo win the 2018 CSA Futsal Championship

Written by Administrator

With eight teams representing seven provinces the 2018 CSA Futsal Championship finally felt like a true national competition. Unsurprisingly, the final featured two elite teams to provide another Quebec vs Ontario rivalry.



The format of the tournament saw the eight teams divided into groups of four with the top team in each group meeting for the title, thus ensuring player safety and higher match quality with only one match per day being played.

Taking place once again at Queen's University in Kingston, ONT, the tournament saw participation from debutantes Manitoba, Yukon, Nunavut, and Alberta while the trio of Saskatchewan, Quebec, and Ontario made their return.

The 7/8th place match featured both participating territories which Yukon edged out Nunabut by a 3-2 score while Calgary won the battle of the prairie with a 4-2 win over Winnipeg in the 5-6th place match.

With Saskatoon Olimpia FC, led by head coach Jaime Meza, landing their second consecutive medal with a 5-2 win in the bronze medal match against Sporting Quebec only the championship match remained.

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Last year's national champions Sporting Montreal topped their group with three convincing victories over Ranking (NU), Winnipeg, and Saskatoon. Sporting went into their final group stage match practically assured of a spot in Sunday's final so they rested a considerable portion of their roster for that final game.

With an established core of quality players returning from last year's championship winning side including captain Shaquille Michaud and arguably Canada's top teenage prospect Mohamed Farsi, Sporting added more talent to their roster including the dangerous offensive threat Jean-Gilles Berlin who led Quebec in scoring last year with over 40 goals in their quest to become the first team to repeat as national champions.

Their opponents would be Ontario champions Toronto Idolo. With four players having been capped for the Canadian national team and led by national team Assistant Coach Lorenzo Redwood it was evident that Toronto Idolo have an abundance of talent available at their disposal.

Toronto also went undefeated with wins over Calgary, Whitehorse, and a thriller over Sporting Quebec on Saturday that featured a last minute goal by Luis Rocha to ensure the Ontario/Quebec final.

After showing signs of complacency in Saturday's final match by nearly blowing a four goal lead in the 2nd half, Idolo could not afford to make the same mistake against the reigning champions.

Montreal started off as the aggressors in the opening few minutes penetrating the open gaps that Idolo left, perhaps a result of nerves. They notched a solid pair of shots on target but a fine pair of leg saves by Idolo's goalkeeper and captain Luigi Caruso kept the score deadlocked.

Toronto would strike first when young gun Edson Jimenez-Marquez flicked in a juicy rebound left by Sporting keeper Adam Ghemari.

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Sporting nearly equalized minutes later as the ball was trickling towards the goal but Idolo's star defender Eduardo Jaragui cleared it off the line to preserve the lead.

That would prove valuable as only seconds after Christian Samaniego perfectly finished a low strike into the right corner to double up Toronto's lead.

Foul trouble would hurt Montreal as they fouled out with seven minutes left in the half, forcing them to defend less aggressively and giving Idolo more space to work their plays.

Shortly after fouling out, Sporting would commit their 6th foul which setup national team player Marco Rodriguez to step up and he delivered a clinical finish off the left post to give Toronto a commanding 3-0 lead.

A brutal defensive turnover by the normally reliable Brendan Nerio gave Toronto forward Damian Graham a breakaway and he would make no mistake by going around Ghemari and sliding in his first of the match and more importantly to extend their lead to four.

Known primarily in Toronto area leagues, Graham finally broke out of his shell and showcased his vast talents on the national stage with a 13 goal performance over four matches; not only averaging a hat-trick per game but also earning the golden boot as the tournament's leading scorer and surely a tryout with the national team in the near future.

If the speedy Graham was Idolo's lightning then their thunder must have been 23 year old Jacob Orellana who showed incredible poise, strong two-way play, and leadership throughout the competition while dominating the overwhelming majority of battles he faced.

Idolo took a strangehold by scoring their fifth when Saturday's hero Luis Rocha delivered a beautiful cross crease pass to a wide open Graham who nailed it off the volley to make it 5-0 going into the break.

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Sporting were given a breath of hope in the second half after defender Fernando Herrera made a terrific goal line save to prevent further damage which shortly led to them getting on the scoreboard courtesy of a Manuel Chavez strike that came as a result of Montreal playing the keeper as the fifth attacker.

Both teams fouled out but the biggest blow came to Montreal when their biggest scoring threat in Berlin was red carded for a harsh tackle. Sporting committed their 6th of the half and team captain Eduardo Jaragui stepped up and in what almost was a replica of the earlier Rodriguez penalty leveled it off the left post and in to once again give Toronto a five goal lead.

Jaragui, a national team player, was easily one of the top three players of the competition notching more minutes than any other player in the competition and was an absolute rock at the back for Toronto all tournament long.

Despite constant five attacker pressure from Montreal and a series of 10m penalties from fouls they could just not penetrate Caruso's goal as Toronto Idolo secured the championship with a 6-1 victory.

This is Redwood's second national title in three years. After winning both the CSA Championship and the Futsal Canada Cup in 2016 with Toronto United he now becomes the winningest coach in Canadian national competitions history.