

Soccer Spotlight – Avalanche FC

Welcome to our first spotlight! Francisco Alaniz of Avalanche was asked to share what our sport has meant to him, and the importance of team. His first reaction was to share the spotlight. There is no "I" in team, as they say! I hope you will enjoy these natural responses, and feel free to share who you would like to see in a spotlight in the coming months. #CUSApride

From Francisco Alaniz:

I would like to introduce you to Andrew Wylie. He is the player I mentioned. Andrew has been playing in Cusa for a couple of decades. He managed Avalanche from 2005 to 2009 and has been the DNA / playing philosophy of our team ever since. He has been the leader in welcoming and making feel at home so many players from all over the world that when joining our team were new to Calgary and new to Cusa, perhaps even new to Canada. I know that he did that for me when I arrive from Mexico in 2004 . He should also tell you his story how soccer has been a bridge between cultures, here in Calgary with the Chinese community and many foreign players but also in Mexico, when in a team trip we connected with a team down in Playa del Carmen and we played a friendly game with them. We developed so many good friendship with the team from Mexico that Andrew ended up exchanging jerseys with one of their captains (we needed to buy new Jerseys after that, hahaha, but it was totally worth it!).

Players from so many different soccer-cultures have join our team over the years, from all continents, and Andrew has always been a leader at helping coach and guide them into our style of team-playing soccer. During games he has always emphasized our fair play philosophy and our discipline at respecting the opponents and the referees.



We have won so many fair play trophies over the years because we believe in respecting the work of the referees and playing hard but playing fair. His sense of humour and positive attitude has also been key when things are not going our way, when we have struggled to find our game or when there has been other team difficulties. Since I have been in charge of the team he has always been a huge support, as a manager having that support is invaluable.

From Andrew Wylie:

I am honoured to contribute to your project, especially as a representative of the special club that is Avalanche FC1. As a native Calgarian, I have played organized soccer in this city for almost forty years, first through CMSA and then CUSA. I have played with Avalanche FC for almost 25 years, playing as low-divisionally as DIV 5 and as high as DIV 1.

Avalanche FC started somewhere between 1997-2000, but our first CUSA season occurred in 2001, we achieved Division Champions!!



That inaugural team consisted of Chinese-Canadian players (save one!), some of whom were new Calgarians, looking to indulge their favourite sporting pastime in their adopted community. During the twenty years since, Avalanche FC has been fortunate to have counted as members players from a vast array of cultural backgrounds, some having come to Calgary from other Canadian cities, others having arrived from international locales. I once compiled a list of the countries in which some of our players had been born—more than 25 different countries have been represented on Avalanche FC1 since that inaugural 2001 season!

As an individual player, I marvel at my great fortune to have had "the world come to me", in a sense. Without ever living in another city, I have encountered many individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences, all drawn together through the common bond of sport. My time with Avalanche FC has provided a routine reminder that people from different backgrounds are far more similar than different and that we have much to learn from one another. It has also been a source of great pride for me as a Calgarian; such interactions were only made possible by the opportunities this city offers.

Perhaps most impactful has been the enduring friendships cultivated during Avalanche's CUSA existence. (Incidentally, Francisco has played a central role in this, helping to house international players, host team BBQs and foster a culture of respect and kindness...he's too humble to mention these things but I will say them for him—whether he likes it or not!) We have shared exceptional moments with one another, on and off the pitch. Because of the inclusive and unifying culture we have cultivated over the years, players have grown to enjoy spending time together away from the game as well. From camping trips to get-togethers at each others' homes, to wedding celebrations—even to international travel together (!), we have forged bonds of friendship extended to every new member upon his arrival. We are also now at a stage where a number of our teammates (past and present) have started families; their spouses and children are now extended members of the Avalanche family.

Players from our 2015 Division Champion team.



This final one, our "20th Anniversary" event a few years ago, provides a small glimpse into the family that Avalanche FC has become and features a number of past/present players and their families. Glad to participate - especially to share a tiny bit of what makes our club so important to us!

