



PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

We are now closer to the end of the indoor season than we are to the beginning so I'd like to let you all know what Valley United has been up to since my last report.



We have been fielding a total of 14 teams in the Nova Scotia Soccer League (NSSL) - two Senior Men teams, one Senior Women team, U18AA Boys and Girls teams, two U15AA Girls teams and one U15AA Boys team, one U13AA Boys team, U12A Boys and Girls, one U11 Skills Centre Girls team, plus U11 and U10 Skills Centre Boys teams. The Skills Centre and the U12A programs do not record scores but of the nine older teams five have winning records and the nine teams together have a combined record of P 84, W 41, L 41, D2 with Goals For 219 and Goals

Against 213 at the time of writing. Because of the exceptional number of players who came out for the Men and the U18 Boys we, for the first time, decided to field a team in the Valley Men's Senior Soccer League where they currently sit third in the 10 team league with a record of P 12, W 9, L 2, D 1 and 59 goals scored with 12 conceded.

One of the frustrations of our current infrastructure in the Valley is that we are very limited in the programs which we can offer our younger members in the winter months. There are currently not sufficient hours available in the SoccerDome to run the mini programs that we would like to offer in the winter. However we have tried to make the best of the situation by offering the services of our Technical Director, Findlay MacRae, to Valley District Soccer Association

to run a Sunday afternoon program for U7, U9 and U11 players. We also run an additional Tuesday evening program for U9s.

You may recall being invited to respond to a survey at the end of last season about your satisfaction, or lack thereof, with our club's performance last summer. The results are now back and have been posted at valleyunitedsc.ca which is our new website. In total we had 160 responses from a total of around 800 mini and youth players, an overall response rate of about 20%. However this was skewed a bit by a 42% response rate from competitive youth players. The response rate from Minis, Skills Centre and Youth Recreational players was around 15%. We plan to send out the survey closer to the end of the season in future years and hopefully this will increase the response rate.

It was somewhat encouraging that 50% of respondents reported being very satisfied with our performance with a further 40% being fairly satisfied. That left close to 10% who were not at all satisfied which is a number that we hope to see greatly reduced in next year's survey. There were well over 100 written comments which identified a number of issues which we hope to address this year. One area where we hope to improve is the organization at the start of the season, with better information concerning practice nights and field times. With our new TD now in place we also hope to be able to provide more support and mentoring for our coaches with the aim of delivering consistent, quality coaching this season and in seasons to come.

Troy Lenihan, President, VUSC.

JACOB SHAFFELBURG PREPARING FOR NEW MLS SEASON

Former Valley United star Jacob Shaffelburg is back in Nashville preparing for the start of the new MLS season on February 25th. Following his successful loan move from Toronto FC last season Nashville made the move permanent by signing Jacob to a 4 year deal with a club option for 2027. He is looking forward to renewing his partnership with last season's MLS MVP and Golden Boot winner Hany Mukhtar who led the league last year with 23 goals and 11 assists.

Jacob comes from a soccer family as father Mike, sister Jessica and brother Zach all played for Valley United. His talent and passion for the game were recognized early and at age 10 he was promoted to play for the U14s where he continued to play for several seasons.



At age 15 he moved to the Berkshire School in Massachusetts which is renowned for its soccer program. While there he won the US Club Soccer U16 National Championship playing with Manhattan SC. In 2017-18 he was Massachusetts Boys Soccer Player of the Year. In 2019 he signed with Toronto FC and on his first start he assisted on the fastest goal in TFC history (29 seconds) in a 3-2 win over Atlanta. Covid then appeared and disrupted the 2020 and 2021 seasons. In 2022 TFC signed an Italian international, Lorenzo Insigne, who plays in Jacob's position so his playing time was limited and he went to Nashville on loan. He chose Nashville from several interested clubs because they play with wingers and Jacob is, in his own words, 'a traditional, heels on the touch line, winger.' He scored in his first game and added an assist. (Seen celebrating above.) As the commentators said, 'things happen when Shaffelburg is on the field.'

He has appeared 4 times for Canada's Men's National Team but his playing time has been limited since the current coach, John Herdman, does not play with wingers and 1 central striker (4-3-3 formation) but with wingbacks and 2 central strikers (3-5-2 formation.) But coaches choose team formations based on the players available and as personnel changes so may the formation chosen, giving Jacob more chance to star on the international stage as well as in the MLS.

WHAT HAS YOUR TD BEEN DOING THIS WINTER?



Having started work as Valley United's Technical Director just 7 months ago, in July 2022, Findlay MacRae has been on a steep learning curve ever since. Despite having been immersed in Valley soccer for many years the scale and scope of the job are still a challenge. While we have less players and less teams in the winter, due to the scarcity of good indoor facilities, we still run 15 teams of which Findlay coaches 5. He coaches the 2 Men's NSSL teams and the U18 Boys. And because we feel it is important for players to master the basics of the game as early as possible he also coaches the U10 Boys and the U11 Girls. In addition to evening training at the Dome this involves spending every second Saturday with the teams for their games at the inflatable dome behind the Dartmouth General Hospital. This belief in the importance of getting young players off to a good start is also why the club volunteered Findlay's services to Valley District Soccer Association to run the Sunday afternoon mini program for U7, U9 and U11 players at the Dome. The current session has 140 young players involved. The club also runs it's own U9 program on Tuesday nights with registration limited to 30 players. Findlay can also be found at the Dome almost every evening during the week, either coaching his own teams or watching the other teams training.

But all this is only part of the TD's work during the winter. A big part of the job is preparing for the summer and the greater numbers of players, teams and coaches. The club is well aware of the problems which occurred at the start of

last season and is determined to prevent that happening again, while at the same time being realistic and acknowledging that with 800+ players and dozens of teams there may still be some glitches despite our best efforts. Hopefully these will be minor and easily resolved.

Part of the summer planning involves the deployment of summer students. These positions are part funded by the Federal and Provincial governments and detailed grant applications have been submitted by the club. It is hoped that there will be sufficient resources to support the increased scope of programming planned.

As mentioned in previous newsletters, we are in the process of seeking accreditation from Soccer Nova Scotia and Canada Soccer as a Quality Soccer Provider, the first rung on the four rung ladder of Club Licensing. Findlay has been very active in this process and all the required documentation has now been submitted.