

SUCCESSFUL ST. PATRICK'S DAY TOURNEY HAS FFC EXCITED ABOUT EVENT'S FUTURE

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FREDERICKSBURG, Va. (Friday, March 30)—The first-ever St. Patrick's Day Invitational, hosted by Fredericksburg FC, turned out to be a great success for the club and the teams that participated.

I talked with Tournament Director Mayowa Owolabi about the event and some of the highlights and things that were learned that will help in future events hosted by the club.

In all, the tournament maxed out its number of teams with 74 in attendance—split into 12 divisions for both boys and girls in U9-U15 age groups—from Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia and even as far away as Michigan.

Owolabi said for most tournaments teams are looking for certain things like quality competition, beautiful game fields, staying on schedule, good referees and quality trophies. The event “hit all of those needs right on the head,” according Owolabi.

“The tournament went off very well in my eyes and I received a lot of positive feedback. Keys to people’s positive feedback were that they loved the facility. FFC Park is like no other in the area and the playing surface is one of the best grass facilities that you can play on in the state, let alone the region. The schedule was sent out well in advance, so people knew their schedules and could plan accordingly, and our live score updates were lightning fast. All games went off as scheduled so that helped the tournament go off without missing a beat.”

Wonderful fields definitely make a tournament enjoyable, but so does the off-the-field environment created.



While all seven FFC Park fields were being used for both days of the tournament, there was also a personalized T-shirt and hoodie vendor, a soccer gear pop up shop vendor, a Girl Scout troop selling Girl Scout cookies and a fully stocked concession stand. It all allowed for families to spend numerous hours at the park with multiple things to do to stay entertained between games.



Steve Chaffin, the coach of Michigan Revolution 04 Stars FC, said he chooses a tournament out of the state every year so his squad can see some unfamiliar competition. In the past, his teams have attended tournaments at Disney, as well as in Chicago, South Bend, Ind., and Memphis, Tenn., among others.

He had many good things to say about several aspects of FFC's event itself and how it was run, along with its proximity to other tourist destinations in the region.

"The atmosphere and communication was probably the best I've ever had with a tourney leading up to our arrival. Mayowa and his staff did a fantastic job running the tourney and keeping it all organized. This is definitely a tournament I would return to in the future," Chaffin expressed. "The venue was well maintained with no trash and or debris left around after games or during. The fields were really impeccable to our normal with what looked like hardly much wear to them. For the first year of this tourney, Fredericksburg FC did a great job organizing and running what we thought was a very fair, competitive and fun tournament to be part of.



"The families also really enjoyed the proximity of the venue to the Washington, D.C., area and the ability to take in the sites of our nation's capital," he continued. "Most of my players and families have only seen it on TV so it was pretty cool to see their faces when actually being in the city as well as Fredericksburg itself."



Owolabi was quick to point to all the aforementioned staff involved that made sure the first-time event went off without a hitch.

"I would like to thank all of the tournament volunteers, which were all club members," said Owolabi, who also serves as FFC's Technical Director of Coaching. "We had former and current players, parents of players and other family

members volunteer their time to help as field marshals and park staff. Without the volunteers this tournament would not have ran as smoothly.”

The success of the tournament also spurred the club on for bigger and better things for the event in the future. Now, with a whole year to plan for the second edition, Owolabi is excited about the potential for the future of the event.

“Next year, we are hoping to double in size. Potentially spread the tournament over two weekends if we can create the interest in participating,” he contemplated. “We will start marketing the event much sooner and now with our first year completed, we now know how to operate a bit better.”



What did some FFC parents think of the tourney?

Here are some of their thoughts on standout moments . . .

The U12 Boys Black team saying at Thursday’s practice before the tournament that they were going to win for Coach Ryan Zinkhan! Then going into OT and then PKs, winning the championship and then handing Coach Ryan the trophy!!

Also having players and parents from other teams cheering on other teams!! It really displayed the culture that we have at FFC! It’s more than a club, it’s family!!

—From Jenny Buzzell-Parker on Facebook



My highlight was when the u12 boys went to PK’s for the finals and @futbolr_t made a brilliant save to win the championship!

—From @badrebel on the FFC Instagram