



Under 12 – 97s



Back Row: Jean-Francois Brule, Ryan Kiss, Zachary Parent, Jacob Sapardanis, Luka Avdalovic, Trevor Bryan, Noah Pio, Dredon Kelly. **Front Row:** Aleksei Belinsky, Liam MacDougall, Zachary Guilbeault, Andrew Woodall, Dylan Kolic, Daniel Manzon, Tobi Taiwo, Stefan Zastavnikovic. **Missing:** Matt Barnes **Coaches:** Mike Pio, Chris Woodal.

2009 – A year that was fine! Expectations were high for this '97 team and rightly so. With a solid core and six new players (1/3 of a team added to the roster), coaches Mike Pio and Chris Woodall were going to have to work hard to ready their team to meet everyone's high expectations. Following the club's philosophy of player development through a strong emphasis on technical training and the possession game, the boys worked hard to ready themselves for their first season in the WOYSL (Western Ont. Youth Soccer League).

SPRING

The first place to hone their skills was in the States' WSSL (Western Suburban Soccer League). Playing some tough competition, our team went 7-2, with our best game of the season played against the Michigan Wolves in an other words, lob-sided loss, not indicative of the way the game was played.

KICK-OFF CUP

May arrived and the WOYSL Kick Off Cup was the first time we were about to see our future summer competition from southwestern Ontario for some time to come. Our boys went 4-0, handily defeating the likes of Sarnia, Kitchener, Ciociaro (Windsor) and Kitchener. In the Cup final, we lost a close one to a skilful, athletic London Hotspurs 3-2. Despite the loss, our boys showed their resilience and competitive nature, battling back from a two-goal deficit and giving the fans an entertaining final. They were looking forward to another crack at the Hotspurs.2010.



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SUMMER

Finishing second at the Kick-Off Cup, our boys had something to prove to everyone, including themselves, as they approached the new season. Would our game be consistent enough to have a winning season? Indeed it was! The '97's finished with a 13-1 record, losing only to Sarnia and a hot goalkeeper on a hot summer day with our rosters lacking its star strikers. However, this loss probably came at a perfect time, as you'll later read about in our Ontario Cup run. By the end of August, our 97 boys secured the season championship beating the second place Hotspurs by eight points and three wins. A repeat performance of this year in 2010 will secure us a birth in Level 1 in the OYSL (Ontario Youth Soccer League). But only hard work and preparation will get us there!

ONTARIO CUP

Some of our most memorable shining moments came in Ontario Cup this year. In what amounted to a less-than-challenging first round tournament, the 97 Nationals went 4-0 defeating Sarnia, Kitchener, London Euros, and Woodbridge Strikers B by a combined score of 21-2. The Quarterfinal round would be a true test for our boys having to play the Mississauga Strikers from the elite SRS� league. What a game it was! Early in the match, both teams with the best offences this province has to offer exchanged goals. With Windsor up 3-1 nearing the end of the opening half, keeper Andrew Woodall was ejected from the game on a questionable call. The ensuing free kick resulted in a goal from Mississauga closing the gap to 3-2 at half.

Mississauga thought they had us when they scored the quick tying goal early in the second half. But our boys would have nothing of it in front of 100 supportive fans. The Nationals went on to score four more unanswered goals to win the game 7-3 and land themselves a spot in the Ontario Cup Semi-Finals.

On August 28th, the 97 Nationals traveled up to the Hershey Centre in Mississauga not knowing what to expect and not knowing they were in for an experience of a lifetime. The march, the anthem, and the introductions... all the excitement left our boys a bit flat early in the game. The boys rallied for their suspended goalkeeper Woodall, making the game close on a number of occasions. In the end, our boys fell short 3-2 to a more disciplined Ottawa United Force team. Although our Cup run was over, our dreams aren't dashed. Our sights and efforts will re-focus on 2010.

Special thanks goes out to a number of supporters who took an active role in coaching this promising team. Much appreciation goes to Steve Vagnini, Dan Kolic, and Steve Calzavera for their support and guest coaching appearances. Also, a special thank-you goes to the U13 coach, Frank Drkulec, and U14 coach, Ken Zytner and their teams for taking some of our boys in to their practices. Your years of experience and coaching talents were invaluable to our future hopefuls.

Keep an eye on this team in the future!

Exciting soccer lies ahead!