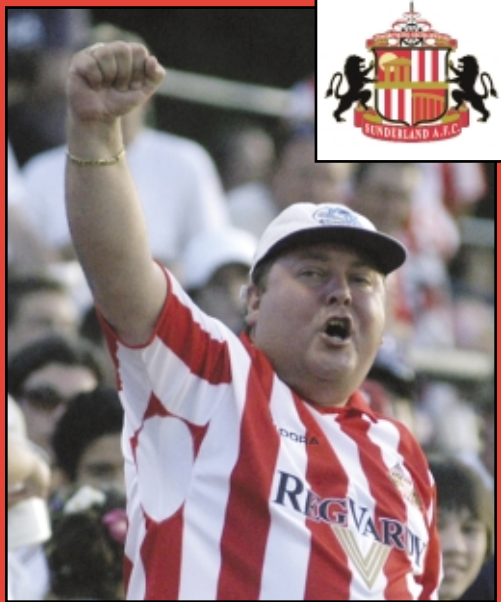


# All-stars stand proud

■ Cormac Rea, Victoria



**A GRAND AFFAIR:** Royal Athletic Park, Victoria, was jam-packed an hour before kick-off



**RED & WHITE ARMY:** From across the pond they came to see their beloved Sunderland meet their match in the best of BC's amateur PCSL and VMSL players



Victoria's **Royal Athletic Park** is the closest thing the city has to an **Old Trafford**. Its storied history has seen visits from such high-profile sides as **Chelsea**, **Dundee United** and **Hearts** to play against local and **Provincial All-star** teams. Lacking nothing in pomp and pageantry, Royal Athletic was transformed for the July 14 **Sunderland AFC vs. BC All-stars** match.

The pitch was in excellent condition, as the grounds crew slaved over the turf for weeks ahead of time. With an attendance of 2381 fans, many of which were awash in the red and white stripes of Sunderland, it was possible to see evidence of Victoria's rich tradition as young and old alike thronged the entrance to the park, ringing the outside of the stadium fencing and packing the venue for at least a half-hour before kick-off. The mood was electric and celebratory as travelling Sunderland fans were in full effect, especially with the addition of one 'super fan' who regularly galloped the course of the stands urging everyone to their feet with massive flapping motions that, I'm told, is quite trendy among the Sunderland massive these days.



**PLENTY OF MOORE:** Where there was Will, there was a way



**PROUD GRANDFATHERS aka Bubbles & BS:** Presidents of the PCSL and VMSL – Len McAdams (left) and William Azzi respectively, enjoyed their day in the sun at RAP, July 14, losing by the slim margin of 1-0



**THE DYNAMITE DUO:** Co-coaches of the BC All-stars, Dante Zanatta (Victoria) and Martin Foden (Surrey) fared much better than 2004's meeting with Hearts, though again, they had just one day to make heroes of men

## THE ORCHESTRATOR:

Sharon Marejka, Executive Director of the Lower Island Soccer Association, proved tireless, fearless and priceless in staging the July 14. Though commended for her T-Shirt coup among other brilliant ideas, Marejka cannot explain the lack of face-painting at the BC Provincials she helped stage a week earlier!



Photos this side & BC: **MARK OKOTH:** DigitalAction.ca

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After watching the **VMSL All-stars** take the game to **Millwall** last year at Coquitlam's **Town Centre Stadium**, only to lose after what was a shockingly inaccurate offside call, it was tempting to imagine that 2005's BC All-stars might vindicate past injustices somewhat. Lining out with a team almost entirely comprised of **PCSL** affiliated players, the All-stars of 2005 reflected a substantial **Victoria United** presence of six players. With, again, only one training session at hand, coaches **Dante Zanetta** and **Martin Foden** needed to have a steel spine to the squad and United players **Rob Veenhoff**, **Will Moore**, **Kevin Mennie** and **Paul Vandenboomen** all featured in the starting XI.

Similar to last year's matchup, the All-stars had several golden opportunities to open their account. **Joe Scigliano** and **Moore** had chances inside the six yard box but it would seem that Zanetta and Foden sought to contain Sunderland rather than seek the win outright. Strangely, none of the PCSL's ten top scorers were selected for the team, including hometown favourite **Steven Scott**.

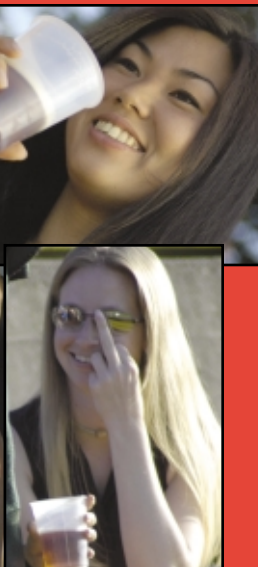
Sunderland failed to find the net in the first 45 and standouts for BC had to be the two big centre-backs. **Steve Millar** and **Veenhoff** rarely erred in their containment of **Ireland** international, **Steven Elliott** and **England u21** prospect, **Jonathan Stead**. Midfielders **Moore** and **Kevin Mennie** both provided stuck-in performances, going toe-to-toe and tackling just as hard. **Darko Jelic** of **New Westminster Khalsa** also stood out at right-back while young **Tyler Roselund** impressed in the latter stages, apparently catching the eye of Sunderland's coach, **Mick McCarthy**.

In retrospect, the match was much closer, in play and in scoreline, than anyone might have dared predict. It is interesting to note the ever-narrowing gulf of skill separating the upper-level amateur from their professional counterparts. Though both teams fielded players with great ability, the professional advantage was only slightly evident in pace and precision. Yet it must be noted that Sunderland approached the match primarily as a fitness drill and their overall team dynamics and passing was, at times, clearly superior to BC's. One is left to wonder what a properly trained All-star squad might have done with more time and preparation.

Regardless, judging by the legion of dedicated fans at Royal Athletic, in full voice well after the full-time whistle, Sunderland and McCarthy found success. Exotic on a small park in a small Canadian city at twilight, Sunderland's grace and manner with supporters and fans was endearing and genuine. As the lights dimmed at Victoria's football home, Sunderland's players were among the last to leave their enthusiastic supporters, who were simply overjoyed to have seen and met their team so far from home.



**100% EFFORT:** BC's keepers spared no expense in duty



Photos this side: **CJVG:** World Football Pages

**CURIOUS MOTIVES:** Clearly, this whole event was just another glorious opportunity for Len McAdams to get lots of pretty women drunk