

Canadians need to expose themselves

■ Ian Kennett, Surrey

Canadian football fans, particularly those in Vancouver, recently experienced three spectacles in close succession; **Canada's** loss to **Honduras**, Canada's first round exit from the **Gold Cup**, and the **Whitecaps** 3-0 victory over **Sunderland**. The combined and concerning results speak much about the state of Canadian football.



The Honduran horror

Canada's loss July 2 was a continuation of the problems plaguing the national team, namely, the inability to score, and the inability to prevent costly defensive mistakes. Twice against the run of play, Canada was caught out at the back by Honduran counter-attacks, leading to an early second half 2-0 deficit. A Canada rally saw **Kevin McKenna** head home from a **Sandro Grande** corner, but an injury time miss by **Ali Gerba** assured Canada's defeat.

Nothing glittering here

Gold Cup matches against **Costa Rica** (1-0 loss), **USA** (2-0 loss), and **Cuba** showed an organized Canadian squad that played well for stretches and brilliantly at times in the first two matches. Thoroughly dominating Cuba, Canada was unlucky to win by only 2-1. Again, however, a lack of scoring from clear cut chances and an inability to make that final cutting pass or run cost Canada dearly. Two more goals would have given Canada a ticket to the **Quarter-finals**, but it was not to be. Three and out – a disaster, or a stepping stone?

Whitecaps result spells hope?

The July 16 affair was never in doubt as the

mid-season **Whitecaps** easily outmaneuvered a pre-season **Sunderland**, and the score could have been far worse for the **EPL-bound Black Cats** if not for fine first-half goalkeeping. According to coach **Mick McCarthy**, the result was nothing to worry about.

"The Whitecaps played very well, they were fit, and they are well-coached. We are 10 days and two games into training camp, so we have a long way to go to learn to play together and to determine our starting 11. I'm not worried in the least about this result."

A Whitecaps win over a Premiership team – mid- versus pre-season, or, a sign that our football is actually getting better?

More questions than answers

So what do these events tell you about the state of Canadian soccer? What is going right and what isn't? How are our players shaping up compared to foreigners? How will our teams get better? Each question demands an answer.

In the Gold Cup affair Canada fielded several North American-based (NA) players (**Adam Braz**, **Sandro Grande**, **Greg Sutton**, **Patrick Leduc**, **Gabriel Gervais**, and **Ali Gerba** from **Montreal Impact**, **Mike Franks** from the **Whitecaps FC**, and **Dwayne De Rosario** from **San Jose**), with the remainder from European teams. **Klukowski**, **de Guzman**, **Imhof**, **Nsaliwa**, **Stalteri**, and **Radzinski** declined invitations from head coach **Frank Yallop** to play. The quality was certainly missed.

Yallop's response was that this opened up more competition for spots, and that NA players had done well. With a possible Sep. 3 friendly against **Spain**, the question rises whether Yallop will stick with a largely NA

squad or opt to again invite several of European-based players. Are the NA players who met Costa Rica and Cuba, ready to tangle with Spain? While an interesting challenge for Yallop, one wonders if Leduc or Braz, for example, are ready to play the 8th-ranked nation in place of Mike Klukowski or Julian de Guzman? On the other hand, Gervais and Grande are showing that they deserve to be there, no matter who the opponent.

Can the MLS cure our ills?

The **USA** was also comprised mostly of NA-based players, but the Americans hailed from **MLS** roots, not the **USL**. While equally industrious, the **USL** Canadians lacked ball control, and off the ball use of space familiar to the **MLS**. Against Canada, the US consistently had a better touch, made more intelligent and insightful runs on and off the ball, and seemed to know a split second faster, than did the Canadians, just what to do to create space and to make chances out of nothing.

To his credit, Yallop is a strong supporter of **MLS** expansion into Canada. He would like nothing more than one or two **MLS** franchises for the very reasons mentioned above. Yallop explained, "MLS would give us a place for Canadians to play at a higher level, and that would be good for the national team. **MLS** is a higher level, and many of the players in **MLS** are those who play for **CONCACAF** national teams, so the style of play in **MLS** is a little more like **CONCACAF**, than Europe, and Canada could certainly benefit from that."

The right man in the right place

Whitecaps coach **Bob Lilley** suggests that the gap between NA and European players is narrowing, but less so in Canada than in the States. He explained that he "saw Canada play in Seattle (Gold Cup) and Canada did very well, but could not finish the chances that other teams score with. This is because in the US, they pour tonnes of money into their **u17** and **u20** programs to identify and train players, and they have had **MLS** for 10 years. There are more opportunities for good young Americans to play and progress."

Lilley believes the **Whitecaps** need to work to get more players into Yallop's national program because "opportunities for Canadians to play abroad are increased... more managers will take notice when players have been included in the national program."

He also suggests more friendlies against **Sunderland** and the like, would increase player's profiles, and, "If the **Whitecaps** beat such teams... people take notice."

Last summer during **IPSS2004**, Yallop's **Reserves** tied Scotland's **Heart of Midlothian**, and beat England's **Millwall** in a game that gave **Josh Simpson** and **Adrian Serieux** jobs in England.

"I know about Simpson," **Sunderland's** **McCarthy** confessed, "and I like the things that he does. He did well for **Millwall**," adding, "You never know when a player will catch my eye or somebody else's, and if I see somebody, then I take it from there." ●

CDAgames

Men's: international friendlies

★ **Canada 1-2 Honduras**
July 2, 2005, Swangard Stadium, Burnaby

Men's: 2005 Gold Cup

★ **Canada 0-1 Costa Rica**
July 7, 2005, Qwest Field, Seattle, USA

★ **Canada 0-2 USA**
July 9, 2005, Qwest Field, Seattle, USA

★ **Canada 2-1 Cuba**
July 12, 2005, Gillette Stadium, Foxboro

Men's u20: Friendlies

★ **Canada 0-2 China**
April 23, 2005, Frankfurt, Germany

★ **Canada 1-2 Mainz Reserve**
April 26, 2005, Frankfurt, Germany

Men's u20: Friendlies

★ **Canada 1-1 Honduras**
May 13, 2005, Pan American Stadium, New Orleans

★ **Canada 1-2 USA**
May 18, 2005, National Sports Centre, Blaine

★ **Canada 0-2 Morocco**
June 3, 2005, Lievin, France

★ **Canada vs. Belgian Select**
June 6, 2005, TBA

Men's u20: 2005 FIFA WYC Holland

★ **Canada 1-1 Syria**
June 12, 2005, Tilburg, Netherlands

★ **Canada 0-2 Colombia**
June 15, 2005, Tilburg, Netherlands

★ **Canada 1-4 Italy**
June 18, 2005, Kerkrade, Netherlands

Men's u17: CONCACAF Final Qualifying

★ **Canada 0-2 Honduras**
May 17, 2005 • Estadio Arturo Gonzalez, Culiacan, Mexico

★ **Canada 5-0 Haiti**
May 19, 2005 • Estadio Arturo Gonzalez, Culiacan, Mexico

★ **Canada 0-2 Mexico**
May 21, 2005 • Estadio Arturo Gonzalez, Culiacan, Mexico

Women's: International friendlies

★ **Canada 1-1 Holland**
Apr. 19, Apeldoorn, Holland

★ **Canada 1-3 Germany**
Apr. 21, Osnabruck, Germany

★ **Canada 2-3 Germany**
Apr. 24, Hildesheim, Germany

★ **Canada 2-0 France**
Apr. 24, Strasbourg, France

★ **Canada 4-3 Denmark**
May 28, Copenhagen, Denmark

★ **Canada 1-3 Sweden**
May 28, Stockholm, Sweden

★ **Canada 0-3 Norway**
May 31, Sarpsborg Stadium, Oslo, Norway

★ **Canada vs USA**
June 26, Virginia Beach Sportsplex, Virginia

★ **Canada vs Germany**
Sep. 1, Swangard Stadium, Burnaby, BC

★ **Canada vs Germany**
Sep. 4, Commonwealth Stadium, Edmonton, AB

Women's u18: Adidas Cup

★ **Canada 1-1 USA**
May 30, Houston Meiyer Park, Texas, USA

★ **Canada 4-1 USA Youth R.2**
May 31, Houston Meiyer Park, Texas, USA

★ **Canada 1-2 Japan**
June 2, Houston Meiyer Park, Texas, USA

★ **Canada vs. USA Youth R.1**
June 3, Houston Meiyer Park, Texas, USA

Choose your weapon

Attiva, Legend, Predator...

Check out our entire arsenal of footwear



DIADORA
PASSIONE TOTALE

adidas

"The Soccer Shop"

North America Sports

3695 East Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC
604.299.1721 soccershop@telus.net
www.northamericaspports.com

