

SOCCER NOVA SCOTIA

2023 NIGHT OF
EXCELLENCE



PROGRAM

AWARD DESCRIPTIONS

True Sport Regional Player of the Year (U8 to U12) - Awarded to a U8 to U12 grassroots player who best exemplifies the True Sport principles: go for it, play fair, respect others, keep it fun, stay healthy, include everyone and give back.

Community Player of the Year (U13 to U18) - Recognizes a female and male U13 to U18 community player with outstanding performance in their stage of LTPD and embodies the Soccer NS values of respect, inclusion, quality and integrity.

Youth Performance Player of the Year - Recognizes a female and male player at the AAA/AA, provincial or national level that has exhibited exceptional performance in the sport, representing their team, province or nation with respect, integrity and excellence.

Senior Player of the Year - Recognizes a senior female and male player at any level of the game who has exhibited exceptional performance and embodies the Soccer NS values of respect, inclusion, quality and integrity.

Performance Coach of the Year - Recognizes a certified or trained coach working at the AAA/AA, provincial or national level. The coach should have aspirations of further development in the performance stream of coaching. This coach embodies the Soccer NS values of player-centered, respect, inclusion, innovation, quality and integrity.

Community Coach of the Year - Recognizes a trained coach at the community level who is committed to player development and instilling a lifelong passion for the game. This coach embodies the Soccer NS values of player-centered, respect, inclusion, innovation, quality and integrity.

Grassroots Coach of the Year - Recognizes a trained coach who is working or committed to LTPD stages Active Start, FUNDamentals or Learn to Train and directs his/her program with sportsmanship and within the principles of the Long Term Player Development plan. This coach embodies the Soccer NS values of player-centered, respect, inclusion, innovation, quality and integrity.

AWARD DESCRIPTIONS

Official of the Year - Recognizes a female and male referee who is committed to development and has shown progress and achievement at the local, provincial, national or international level.

Young Official of the Year - Recognizes a female and male youth referee who is committed to development and has shown progress at the local, provincial or national level.

Regional Volunteer of the Year - Recognizes an individual who has given their time to impact and grow the game in their region of the province. This person embodies the Soccer NS values of player-centred, respect, inclusion, innovation, quality and integrity.

Person of Distinction - The Person of Distinction award is nominated by the Nova Scotia soccer membership. The award is presented to a person who has gone above and beyond to better the game of soccer across the province. This could be through but not limited to technical leadership, fair play, coaching, excelling on the pitch, refereeing, and/or dedication to administration.

Innovative Program Award - Awarded to a team or club that has created an innovative program, incorporating new and creative ways to improve the experience of members.

Team of the Year - Recognizes a Nova Scotia female/male team's outstanding performance in the team's respective stage of development. Open to teams of all level of play.

2023 SCHOLARSHIP AWARD RECIPIENTS

Carol Shadbolt Scholarship

Idara Akpan

Bachelor of Science, Acadia University

Dr. Irene Szuler Scholarship

Ellie Lancaster

Bachelor of Arts, Cape Breton University

Frank H. Bailey Memorial Scholarship

Cameron Brown

Bachelor of Science, Mount Allison University

Halifax King of Donair Scholarship

Jacob Lee

Honours Chemical Engineering, University of Waterloo

Hartlen Family Scholarship

Benjamin Thompson

Bachelor of Medical Sciences, Dalhousie University

Robert Sayer Scholarship

Georgia Gavas

FYP, Sciences, University of King's College

Stephenie Allt Memorial Scholarship

Molly Peppard

Bachelor of Science-Aviation, Mount Allison University



TRUE SPORT GRASSROOTS PLAYER OF THE YEAR



Claire Kaupp - Cape Breton

As a 2012 born player Claire played her debut season in the U13AA Tier One Soccer Nova Scotia League a year up for Cape Breton FC and was a stand-out in midfield. Her play in the two SNS Showcases would have earned her a slot in the Provincial Top 60 Camp if she was 2011 born but we look forward to seeing her involved there this year. Claire's attitude in welcoming new players into the Regional Training Centre program and being a selfless team-mate has been exemplary. She embodies the True Sport values and is a credit to herself, her family and her club.



Dominic Nguyen - Halifax

Dominic, an original member of Ignite Soccer since 2020, has consistently demonstrated exceptional leadership on and off the pitch.

Dominic's coaching shines through in his ability to ensure equal participation during training and games. During a summer shooting drill, he effortlessly hit a challenging target, breaking the string off the goal. Instead of keeping the reward, he selflessly suggested using the money for a team celebration.

Recognizing his outstanding qualities, Dominic was appointed Captain of the U12A team this winter season.

Dominic's dedication extends beyond soccer, as seen in his initiative to study and improve his leadership skills. Dominic's innate leadership qualities promise a lasting impact on our community.



TRUE SPORT GRASSROOTS PLAYER OF THE YEAR



Macie McLeod - Harbour East

In the winter and summer of 2023, Macie McLeod showcased exceptional sportsmanship as a dedicated member of the UDFC U12A Girls. Not only does Macie actively foster team unity, but she also extends genuine inclusivity to quieter teammates. Her unwavering positivity and relentless work ethic on the field reflect a commitment to giving her best at all times, embodying the True Sport principles of inclusivity, respect, determination, and enjoyment. As a stellar teammate, Macie stands out, her contributions exemplify the essence of sportsmanship and teamwork.



Sam and Zach Boone - Highland

Meet Sam and Zach Boone, these identical, mirror twins, with one being right-handed and the other left, seamlessly collaborating on the wings, making them an exceptional team dynamic.

Beyond their impressive emerging skills, it's their exceptional character that truly sets them apart as award winners. Positivity and respect radiate from these boys, evident in their consistent cheering for teammates and uplifting pep talks. Their unwavering commitment is unmatched—they show up, never complain, and genuinely strive for improvement. The Boones are not only 'go-to' players for coaches but also teammates, giving their all in every game. What makes them extraordinary is their kindness, having never uttered a harsh word. Today, we celebrate Sam and Zach Boone, exemplifying sportsmanship, dedication, and camaraderie that make them true champions on and off the field.



TRUE SPORT GRASSROOTS PLAYER OF THE YEAR



Xander Schnare - South Shore

Xander embodies the true spirit of soccer—a 'True Sport' in every sense. Xander inspires all with his infectious passion for the game. Win or lose, his face lights up with a smile that spreads from ear to ear as he leaves the field. Arriving early and leaving late, Xander carries his team's gear with pride, showcasing his unwavering commitment. His positive attitude is a constant, reflecting a deep love for soccer and a genuine adherence to the rules and standards set by the club. Xander's respect for opponents and the game itself shines through, making him a standout player whose enthusiasm and sportsmanship elevate the playing field.



Brooklyn Breckenridge - Suburban

Brooklyn is incredibly hard working, respectful, positive and is always willing to help out. She brings an infectious energy to the team. Whether it's cleaning up after a session or helping out new teammates, you can count on Brooklyn to make things happen with a smile. Respecting everyone around, Brooklyn's friendly approach creates a supportive vibe that makes the program feel like one big, happy family. Cheers to Brooklyn for being the go-to team player who adds that extra touch of awesome to everything!



TRUE SPORT GRASSROOTS PLAYER OF THE YEAR



Clara Blenus - Valley

Clara recently concluded her second year in U9 this summer, progressing through the Kings West Soccer Program since U4 in 2017, guided by her mother's coaching. Navigating the challenges of being an athlete under a parental coach, Clara found love for soccer, embracing the highs of scoring and the camaraderie during rain games, as well as facing the lows of tough losses. Demonstrating substantial growth this season, Clara values teamwork, exemplified by her proactive assistance with gear and selflessly creating opportunities for her teammates.

She has assumed a leadership role, even volunteering as a goalie when needed. Beyond the field, Clara fosters inclusivity, willingly giving up her jersey number and contributing to the U5 and U7 programs. Expressing aspirations of becoming a coach or teacher, Clara's dedication to soccer reflects her commitment to personal and community growth.

COMMUNITY PLAYER OF THE YEAR



Sophia Peach - Cape Breton

On the field as a player Sophia had an outstanding season at centre-back as Cape Breton FC returned to Tier One NSSL play with our U15 Girls squad and helped them to the Final Four. She played almost every minute in the season despite being a 2009 born player and will graduate to U17 to continue testing her defensive virtues next season. Away from her life playing she is one of the island's most respected young referees and helps young players through their early steps in the game in the Soccer Cape Breton League. Sophia displays respect, inclusion and integrity every time she is on the field and exemplifies what it means to be part of the Cape Breton soccer community.



Allister Miles - Halifax

Allister was the captain of the HCU U15 Boys this summer. Not only is Allister a great player he is an excellent teammate, captain, and a fantastic all-around individual - a worthy recipient of Community Player of the Year.

He is always eager to help his teammates, coaches and managers with whatever is needed to make the group better. When Allister plays he leads by example and wears his heart on his sleeve, he gives it his all in practices and games. He shows leadership qualities far beyond his years, always putting the team before

himself. An example this season of this, was when the team needed Allister in a different position, he was asked to move, he showed zero hesitation and was eager to try a new role to better the team.

COMMUNITY PLAYER OF THE YEAR



Brooklynn Wells - Harbour East

Brooklynn is the powerhouse of the Storm U13 Girls team, a quiet leader who sets the example by putting in the extra work. She's not just crazy about soccer; she's crazy about her team and what they can achieve together. Catch her scrolling through social media for new moves to bring to the field. Brooklynn's always there for games and practices, and she's early too! Dedicated, driven, a bit obsessed, she's all hyped up to play. As a defender, she'll zip across the field with a grin, switching positions, scoring penalty kicks, skipping water breaks, and doing extra drills - whatever her team and coaches need. It's all for the love of the game and team spirit, even if it means a little turf in her shoe.



Chase McDermott - Highland

Chase McDermott is a standout 15-year-old player with CC Riders. As a leader on the U15 Boys winter teams for the past two years, Chase played a pivotal role in the team's undefeated victory and A Division title last winter. His leadership continued during the summer with the NAIG team, guiding a young squad. In the U15 Boys league, Chase's versatility shone as the team secured a runner-up finish in the Provincial Championships, with him ranking among the top 10 scorers. Beyond his on-field skills, Chase is known for his positive and respectful attitude, earning the

respect of both players and coaches. Additionally, he is a dedicated champion for juvenile diabetes, fundraising for the Canadian Diabetes Association and serving as a role model for those facing the disease.



COMMUNITY PLAYER OF THE YEAR



Brooklynn Myra - South Shore

Brooklyn Myra is currently on the South Shore United U17 team but she's working her way back from knee surgery. She has been an awesome example of perseverance and never giving up. She played for the U18 girls team in the summer until she had her scheduled surgery to correct her knee and from that point on she has worked tirelessly to get back in playing shape. She has just recently been given the green light to resume training again with the team. She also volunteers with both our mini program as a coach and is volunteering with our U11 Boys Skill

Centre group to help with training. She is a tremendously positive influence on her teammates and is a great kid to coach.



Colton Pettipas - Suburban

Colton is a great player with a remarkable attitude both on and off the field. His commitment to excellence sets a high standard for teammates, serving as an inspiring example. Whether at training sessions or during intense games, Colton's work ethic is unwavering, showcasing a relentless dedication to improvement. Beyond his impressive skills, it's his positive demeanor that truly shines, fostering a collaborative and uplifting team environment. Colton's sportsmanship and commitment make him not only a valuable asset during matches but also a genuine leader who elevates the team's spirit.



COMMUNITY PLAYER OF THE YEAR



Lily Banfield-Wile - Valley

Lily's journey in West Hants soccer began at the age of 5, and this summer marked her inaugural season with the U15 girls, where she not only showcased her skills as a central defender/midfielder but also led the team to provincial victory as the captain. Diligent and committed, Lily's work ethic shines in practice, always willing to go the extra mile. Her unique ability to perceive the game's evolution sets her apart, embodying her mantra, "be where the ball is going to be, not where it has been." A tough and fair player, Lily fosters team spirit, offering encouragement on off

days. Beyond the field, she contributes to coaching U7 players and aspires to delve into mini-refereeing. Lily's soccer prowess extends to her school team and indoor leagues in West Hants, making her an outstanding candidate for recognition. The only quirk? An occasional appearance in an Arsenal shirt.

YOUTH PERFORMANCE PLAYER OF THE YEAR



Ava MacDonald - Cape Breton FC

All through her soccer life to date Ava MacDonald has fought the obstacle of geography and never once let it thwart her. Living in Cape Breton means until this season she has not had Tier One soccer to enjoy but she is a Provincial and now REX and Canada Games player nonetheless. With the U15AAA Girls this season she was inspirational, scoring 10 goals in 21 games playing both midfield and striker to drive her team to the Final Four. This season the emergence of club mate Ella Barry has meant she top level company on Halifax trips but often she has been the only orange jersey at try-outs and still she flourishes. Ava clears barriers that HRM players don't face and continues to shine for club and province. A true Player of the Year candidate.



Mohammed Tolba - Halifax CITY Soccer Club

Mohammed emerged as a standout player in CITY's U17 AAA boys program, contributing significantly to our league and cup double triumph and securing a commendable 3rd place in the Toyota National Championships. Remarkably dedicated, Mo's commitment shines through as he travels from the Highland region to participate at the highest level in NS. Beyond his on-field prowess, Mo proves to be a stellar teammate, fostering a positive team dynamic.

Recognizing his talent, Mo has been selected for the Wanderers U18 Team this summer, foreshadowing a promising future in the sport. His exceptional skills, combined with a strong work ethic, pave the way for a bright and successful athletic journey.



SENIOR PLAYER OF THE YEAR



Abbey Aucoin - United DFC

Abbey Aucoin, a standout player for the UDFC Senior AAA team, showcased her exceptional talent during the summer, netting an impressive 16 goals in just 12 games. Her stellar performance played a pivotal role in securing an undefeated season for the team and clinching a spot at the prestigious Canadian National Championships, where they achieved a commendable 4th place in the country. As a key contributor to Acadia's 2023 campaign, Abbey's prowess on the field was evident as she ranked 6th overall in points in the competitive AUS league. Abbey Aucoin's remarkable

achievements underscore her significant impact on the game, making her a formidable force in women's soccer.



Colby Mercer - Suburban FC

Colby has been a star senior player this year. After a year in the SFC Mens Reserve squad, Colby earned his spot in the Mens First Team as a result of his sheer commitment and dedication to continuous development and work. Colby was the first name on the Game Sheet for the SFC Mens this year. Colby won the Mens AAA league & Provincial Championship and came 4th at Nationals with the SFC Mens Team. Colby is a player who has the most fight and will of anyone you'll meet. Colby lost his father after a short battle with cancer this year, and continued to train, play and

fight in honour of his late father who he knew was watching over him. Colby was recently recognized as a 2nd team AUS all-star for this debut season with the SMU Huskies. Every team would be lucky to have a player like Colby.



COACHES OF THE YEAR



Pat Connors - Community Coach

Coach Pat, a transformative force in girls' soccer for the past decade. As a dedicated coach, he shattered the trend of girls leaving the sport by fostering a safe and respectful environment. Starting at the u10 level, Pat's coaching journey has seen his players evolve into a dominant force, clinching Senior Women's soccer victories for two consecutive summers.

Pat's influence extends beyond teams, attracting girls from various levels to join his squads. Currently coaching the Bay View High School Girls Team and Team Mi'kmaw Nova Scotia at NAIG, Pat's commitment goes beyond victories—he ensures soccer is enjoyable for all. His impact is evident as he encourages youth participation, with over 50 players engaging in coed scrimmages. Pat's legacy extends to the next generation, as former players embrace coaching, passing on the positive experiences he provided.



Hunter Brown - Grassroots Coach

Hunter's impact transcended the soccer field as he instilled a passion for the sport through our mini program. From coaching the youngest players in our u5 program to guiding those in the u15 category, Hunter's commitment to nurturing talent remained steadfast.

Players admired Hunter, eagerly learning from his expertise, while parents valued his gentle demeanor. The club recognized and esteemed Hunter's exceptional work ethic and dedication, evident in his flawless attendance and consistently going above and beyond expectations.

Under Hunter's guidance, the club flourished from a single team to fielding seven travel teams and a thriving mini program.

As he bid farewell this past summer, his absence will be deeply felt, but we extend our best wishes for his pursuit of higher education.



COACHES OF THE YEAR



Steve Wilcox - Performance Coach

Steve Wilcox, the accomplished coach of our U17 AAA boys, orchestrated a remarkable season, guiding them to unprecedented success. With a resounding display of dominance, they clinched both the League and Cup titles, adding a Bronze medal at the Toyota National Championship.

Steve's leadership has been pivotal, securing two league titles in three years and fostering a supportive environment on and off the field. His dedication is unparalleled; Steve generously donates his time and expertise, emphasizing that success is limitless. He also coaches the U13AA Boys team.

With an educator background, Steve stands as a respected and genuine leader at Halifax City Soccer Club, significantly impacting Nova Scotia's soccer landscape.

His meticulous preparation, personalized encouragement, and strategic goal-setting have shaped a team that achieved greatness, exemplifying Steve as an outstanding coach and role model.



OFFICIAL OF THE YEAR



Ben Hoskins

Ben completed a successful second year as National Referee. He was appointed by Canada Soccer to participate at the Dallas Cup. Ben was an active referee during the 2023 CPL season, being appointed to 10 games as Referee and 3 games as 4th Official. His regular and consistent performances allowed him to be appointed to the playoff game between Pacific FC vs York United in Victoria, BC.

Ben always finds time to help as much as possible

for local games, as a referee, mentor, instructor or as a colleague simply to support the Nova Scotia referee community.

Ben participated at all of the high level local matches in the province, including Youth and Senior AAA regular season and playoff games, ACAA and AUS games. His reputation on and off the field is impeccable and continues to be an inspiration for younger generations.



Emily MacKinnon

Emily started reffing at the age of 15. Originally from the Cape Breton area, Emily is currently a student at Acadia University. Emily has been an official for a variety of matches, including regular league games, SNS AA and AAA and AUS regular season games.

Emily got an invite to participate in NAIG this summer, her continued positive performances gave her the opportunity to be selected to attend the U17 Club National Championships in Moncton, NB early October.

Emily is committed to continue growing into refereeing and she is already preparing to become a regional referee.



YOUNG OFFICIAL OF THE YEAR



Josie Thompson

Josie recently turned 16 and received her referee badge just over a year ago. Throughout her short time as a referee, Josie has been an official for a variety of matches, including regular league games, SNS AA and AAA, Provincial games and NAIG.

Josie's performances opened the opportunity for her to be selected as one of four Nova Scotia referees to go to the Granby Jean-Yves Phaneuf International Soccer Tournament in Quebec as an official in September. This proved to be a great experience, allowing her to learn from referees from other provinces, as well as being put in different competition scenarios.

Josie always presents as personable and pleasant to work with. Her self-confidence and eagerness to learn has been admirable.



Logan Wigglesworth

Logan is 17 years old and received his referee badge in 2021. Throughout his short time as a referee, Logan has been an official for a variety of matches, including regular league games, SNS AA and AAA, Provincial games, NAIG and ACAA.

Logan's performances opened the opportunity for him to be selected as one of four Nova Scotia referees to go to the Granby Jean-Yves Phaneuf International Soccer Tournament in Quebec as an official in September and for the Senior Club National Championships held in Halifax in early October. These proved to be great experiences, allowing him to learn from referees from other provinces, as well as being put in different competition scenarios. Logan's commitment and eagerness to learn has been admirable. He is ready for the upcoming opportunities that refereeing can provide.



SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE REFEREE COMMUNITY

Carman King

Carman can be seen at the soccer field doing it all: mentoring first year officials; being an on field official; and fitness testing National and FIFA Referees.

Carman's legacy is the organization and training of soccer officials at all levels such that there is a clear path of development through education, mentoring and coaching, from entry level to the highest levels. He has contributed to the game at the local, provincial and national level.

SNS looks forward to benefiting from his continuing interest in Referee Development.

Larry Porter

For over 50 years, Larry has been the 'go to guy' when a referee is needed in the Valley. He has refereed at the local, provincial, and national level of the game gaining respect for his efforts from all.

In recent years, Larry has continued to referee but has committed a great deal of time and effort to the development of entry level, and those referees relatively new to the game. As head instructor for the Valley and then Chair of the Valley Referee Committee he was a driving force to get quality education and training for his referees.

Larry has been a mentor to many referees and an assessor to the more senior referees of the province. As a member of the SNS Referee Development Committee, Larry was the Chief Instructor and oversaw the appointment of course instructors and was part of the team developing content for referee training.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE REFEREE COMMUNITY

Wendell MacGibbon

In his over 50 years of service, Wendell has served many roles from coach and developer of skilled players to his work within the referee community. He has promoted refereeing at the provincial and national levels and all along the way encouraged high standards for referee development and dedication to the task.

He has been a long-time serving member of the SNS Referee Development Committee helping to guide referee growth province-wide. He has been a mentor, instructor, assessor and assignor of referees. In these roles, he has helped in the development of many referees who have provided support to the games locally, provincially, nationally and even at the FIFA level of the game.

Norma Horne

Norma served as a referee and then moved to the back room of administration and support development including serving on discipline and appeals panels. Her greatest commitment was to the development of referee assignors. She wrote the handbook for training assignors and as head assignor for SNS, trained, supported and provided problem-solving for the assignors.

She provided great advice to the developers of IT systems for referee assigning in NS including Ref Centre, Goalline, Demosphere and even RAMP. Without her assistance in those areas, the development and application of assigning programs across NS would have been even more challenging.

Today Norma remains involved as Manager of the Atlantic Coalition of Soccer Referees which helps bridge the gap between the universities and the referees.

REGIONAL VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



Heather Campbell - Cape Breton

Heather has been a community hero in the growth of Whitney Pier Soccer Club and this year helped steer the club to Quality Soccer Provider status in the Canada Soccer Club Licensing process. She is a shining light in encouraging player participation and coach education and a true driving force in the growth of The Beautiful Game on the island.



Megan Meeds - Halifax

Megan Meeds is the epitome of the ideal soccer parent, bringing unparalleled positivity and dedication to Halifax City Soccer Club. Since returning in 2020, Megan has actively managed a U12 girls' team, fostering unity among players and extending connections beyond club boundaries. Her initiatives include introducing mindfulness and mental health sessions, organizing a Christmas card project for community outreach, and spearheading soccer gear drives to alleviate financial barriers.

Megan's impact reaches the board level, where she chairs the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility committee at Halifax City. As the program coordinator and coach for the Unified Special Olympics program, Megan successfully united players from different backgrounds. Her commitment is evident in various roles, from coaching in the U9 Skill Centre to advocating for positive change. Megan Meeds stands as a beacon in the NS Soccer Community, leaving an indelible mark with her multifaceted and unwavering dedication to soccer betterment.



REGIONAL VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



Emma Parkington - Harbour East

In 2023, Emma, Storm's first female President, emerged as the club's driving force. Her passion for soccer radiates, inspiring players and instilling confidence in those less sure of their abilities. Emma fosters joy by connecting experienced players with younger ones as summer coaches.

Beyond the field, she repaired fractured relationships with rival clubs, revamped the website, secured funding, and played a pivotal role in obtaining the Quality Soccer Provider Designation. Emma's dedication extends to coaching and leading Storm's "She Can Coach" initiative. She seamlessly navigates board roles, offering support and guidance. Emma's commitment to breaking barriers is commendable, and her impact on Storm's success is immeasurable.



Makenna McPherson & Connor Hall South Shore

Connor Hall and Makenna MacPherson could be called the heart and soul of our youth sports community. With unwavering dedication, this dynamic duo has generously volunteered with South Shore United for several years. Despite having no children in the program, they've taken on the admirable role of coaching not one but two U15A girls teams and a U18AA girls team. The impact of their commitment extends beyond the game, creating an exceptional environment that resonates with both age groups. Parents consistently praise the positive atmosphere fostered by Connor and Makenna. Their selfless contributions make them the standout choice for Volunteer of the Year in the South Shore. They exemplify the true spirit of this award, making them unparalleled role models within our community.



REGIONAL VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



Peter Crowe - Suburban

Peter Crowe has been a long-term volunteer and servant to the soccer community. Most recently, Peter served as Suburban FC Club President during a time that saw SFC go through monumental changes and growth. Peter was able to turn the vision of Suburban FC into a reality, and without him, nothing at SFC today would have been possible.

Peter gave over 20 years to the soccer community through his several roles, and his time can never be repaid or appreciated to the full extent. In honour of his impact on our club & community, Suburban FC recently renamed our Leadership award/scholarship to the 'Peter Crowe Leadership Bursary.



Heather Rafuse - Valley

Heather is the backbone of Valley United Soccer Club, demonstrating unwavering commitment in multiple roles. Initially leading a U9 team in summer 2022, she smoothly transitioned to manage and coach the VU U12 girls in the subsequent winter. In summer 2023, starting as an assistant coach, Heather seamlessly took on both coaching and

managing duties when needed. Currently, she serves as head coach for U13 girls this winter. Beyond the field, Heather is the team rep for the Ladies Over-30 team, actively playing. Balancing her soccer roles, she is a full-time teacher, contributing to various school activities. Heather's versatility and dedication make her an invaluable leader for Valley United Soccer Club, embodying commitment both in sports and education.



PERSON OF DISTINCTION



Luke Berryman **Halifax CITY Soccer Club**

Luke Berryman became the director of the Skill Centre Program for Halifax City Soccer Club, at the ripe age of 18 and has been in this role for three years. He does it so seamlessly that you would think he was a decade older than he is. Luke is always organized, encouraging of his young athletes, and resolves difficult situations with a calm demeanour.

In addition to running the beast that is “Skill centre”, this past winter Luke volunteered to spearhead a drop- in soccer program for youth at the community YMCA on Gottingen St, to increase accessibility of the sport to kids of all ages and backgrounds who might not otherwise have the opportunity to play. He gathered donations for cleats and nets, and oversaw the sessions himself. This program was so impactful that it grew quickly to well over 50 kids and led to over 100 new players registrations in the community. For many of them, it has become the highlight of their week. The program will continue to run, with an additional focus on gaining more interest with those who identify as female.

Luke is a full time psychology student at Dalhousie University who also plays for the men’s Dalhousie University Varsity soccer team.

This summer, while managing all of this and also playing for his own club, Luke was quietly dealing with a devastating health diagnosis of his father Craig, his first ever soccer coach. Sadly, Craig passed away in October and leaves behind a legacy in the NS Soccer Community. Luke is clearly already on his way to building his own legacy.



INNOVATIVE PROGRAM AWARD

Team Mi'kmaw Nova Scotia Soccer Project



In 2022, Team Mi'kmaw Nova Scotia issued an RFP for coaching for the 2023 North American Indigenous Games. Under the Sporting Direction of Danielle Cyr, and a coaching Team lead by Jenna Blackburn and Pat Connors that included Kerry Michelin, Kayley Clair, Kate Fines, and Mouse S Posse, the team recruited, trained, and developed an Under 18 girls team and under 16 boys team for the

North American Indigenous Games. This resulted in almost 40 Nova Scotia Indigenous Youth putting on a jersey with their Province and the Mi'kmaw crest on it. Youth joined the team from all regions of Nova Scotia, from Membertou to Acadia First Nation, from North Sydney to Yarmouth. The team included many First Nations and Inuit players. The team development was constructive and positive, focused on the player and encouraging their experience as young Indigenous athletes.

The games were a phenomenal experience with both teams playing competitive soccer and earning the respect of their competitors from across Turtle Island. The most notable outcome is the relationships formed between players and between coaches and players.

The feedback from parents has been overwhelming, with one parent recently broadly praising Coach Jenna for her impact on her son and that reflecting on the experience, upon receipt of a personal gift delivered by her, brought the player and parent to tears. It was a privilege for Halifax County to be involved in this project, and notably thank our partners along the way including Cape Breton Soccer, specifically Iain King, Soccer Nova Scotia, United Dartmouth Football Club in addition to the many other clubs that supported their players participating in this project.

The project laid out the foundation for the growth of Indigenous soccer in Nova Scotia and sparked many relationships that will enable the sport to flourish across Mi'kma'ki.



TEAM OF THE YEAR



CCRiders Girls U13A Soccer Team

This exceptional group of young athletes has not only showcased remarkable athletic prowess but has become an inspiring force within the CCRiders community. Beyond the field, their outstanding character serves as a beacon of inclusivity, kindness, helpfulness, and love, setting a standard for the younger generation.

Celebrating differences, embracing each other, and accepting all members, they faced challenges with unity and excelled as a team. With 20 players, ranging from seasoned athletes to newcomers, they demonstrated true teamwork, supporting one another through every practice and match.

In a league often emphasizing individual growth, this team prioritized collective development, resulting in not just a provincial victory but an undefeated season. More than winning, they fostered an environment where every member contributed equally, promoting self-esteem and mutual respect. The CCRiders U13A Girls Soccer Team epitomizes the spirit of teamwork.



TEAM OF THE YEAR



Halifax CITY Soccer Club U17AAA Boys

A group of dedicated individuals who have forged a remarkable journey together, many of them having played side by side for 8-10 years. Their camaraderie and mutual respect laid the foundation for their triumph in the final year.

As Bronze medalists at Nationals, they showcased resilience and skill, complemented by their stunning performance in the SNS Cup where they emerged as champions.

The team's dominance extended to the NSSL League, where they clinched the title with an impressive record of 19 wins, 1 draw, and 1 loss in 21 games. Scoring a whopping 103 goals while conceding only 22, their prowess was unmatched. Additionally, they conquered their division at the Umbro Cup in Toronto, solidifying their status as a force to be reckoned with. This hardworking and cohesive team exemplifies the epitome of success in the realm of competitive sports.



