

## Day Six

After a fun day off from matches with our White Water rafting day, we were again ready to compete and play some matches. Today is Thursday, Feb. 11th and we will play Brujas. We again started off in our 4-3-3 formation, with Jack Mc Bean at the point forward and Juan Carlos Regaldo and Richard Martinez flanking him on either wing. Our midfield trifecta was Eduardo Sanchez, Ruben Duran and Robert Beltran, with the back four of Marcus Jordan, Andrew Pardo, Brayden Prothero and Angel Velasquez, with Tyler Blackmer in goal. From the start the game showed a good Brujas team, that had both athleticism and technique. Our back four were too quiet, not communicating as much as they could and as a result there was some confusion on when to step up and drop. With Brujas sending multiple midfielders into our backline, the need to communicate was even greater. When Brujas played a longer ball over our midfield and into our backline who didn't drop quickly enough, the Brujas forward found himself one vs one with Blackmer and coolly slot the goal. We had learned another lesson. As is the case often time with young players learning the game, it is not always easy for them to communicate. The reality is that communication is a skill, just like passing or receiving a soccer ball, and it must be required of players each and every training session.

Brujas scored again, to go up 2-0 early in the second half, and to make matters more challenging, Aaron Caprio was sent off with a red card after a hard, but what seemed fair tackle. To our boys credit, with a player and two goals down, they never stopped playing hard and applying pressure. A good goal was produced mid-way through the second half when substitute Brian Gutierrez slipped a nice crossing pass to the running Jack McBean who first timed a left-footed ball with the inside of his foot to score. The final fifteen minutes were very exciting and Region IV could have equalized two or three times. Besides the early game confusions in the back, the team played a solid game.

This evening the boys will travel to the downtown San Jose City center to do some sightseeing and shopping. The city is buzzing with life, and the best place to cruise is a building with several dozen vendors in a maze of alley's about the width of two people walking side by side. When you are here, on an international trip, everything is interesting and it was good to see all our boys, enjoy this time out together.

We will play our final game of the trip tomorrow vs the best team in the tournament, Alajuela.

## Day Seven

Early to rise for our pregame breakfast. Again, it is worth noting how good the food has been this whole trip. Plenty of options and fresh fruits always.

We have heard about the Alajuela team from the other coaches. They are well organized, technical, and work very hard. They have been dubbed the top team of the tourney, even by the other Costa Rican teams and coaches. From the first whistle, we could tell that all the hype was for real. Playing in a 3-5-2 formation, with two hard-nosed defensive midfielders and adventurous wingbacks, who were constantly pushing forward aggressively. Because they had good possession they were able to get many numbers forward and for the first twenty minutes we were on our heels, looking to create only a few half-chances on quick counterattacks. The game played tough, but Alajuela were a class side, combining well and showing some brilliant individual play. Within twenty minutes in the second half we were down 3-0... but the story doesn't end there. When it looked like all was lost our boys showed some character by coming back with two goals, one by Jarad Hagaradt and the other from a Brian Gutierrez direct freekick. At 3-2 now, things got even more interesting when Jack McBean narrowly missed on a backheel in front of the goal that would have tied it. Although the equalizing goal never came and the final score was a 3-2 loss, it was by far the most competitive match any of the regional teams had given this tough Alajuela team.

After lunch, we headed downtown again. It was another few hours for the boys to really get a taste and feel for the Costa Rican culture. We decided that walking downtown, outside, would be a better experience than simply going to a mall to shop.

The Dinner and Award ceremony took place in a local tennis club and was a fun event. Costa Rica Soccer tours has done an outstanding job of bringing the eight ( 8) teams together with some fun games that required the boys to seek our players on the other teams. A fun slideshow was shown that got some great cheers and good laughs and the dinner was delicious. All in all it was a great way to spend our last evening with all the players, coaches, and administrators under the same roof, sharing stories and enjoying the culmination of the week. We have had a great time here and tomorrow we head home, all better players and coaches, because of this Costa Rican experience.