

Torneo Nereo Rocco Gradisca Italy
Region IV 91 Boys
April 22 , 23, 2008
Day 1

LAX airport is the destination for all the Region IV 91 Boys players and staff members. We arrived in time for our Air France Flight that departed at 11pm. Once again the entire group was reunited and new players were introduced to the team. We arrived in Paris France at De Gaul Airport for a 4 hour layover, then departed for Venice Italy arriving at 11pm. Our Host Erick Meter was awaiting the team with a nice chartered bus in which we loaded our equipment and left for our one hour drive to the Hotel Columbus. It was a great surprise when we arrived to the hotel. Not only were we fifty yards from the beach, but we were also sharing the Hotel with Juventus the team we met in the semifinals last year with the 90 age group. A meal was provided for the team late night in the hotel restaurant then went to sleep.

April 24th 2008
Day 2

The breakfast was set for 9am on Thursday the 24th. It was a great spread and our players were now being introduced to the Italian culture and food. Immediately after breakfast we all walked across the street to the boardwalk and watched a live air show from Italy's version of the Blue Angels. They were flying in synchronized formations and flying extremely close to the hotel and ocean. The first training session of the day was at 11am at the local soccer stadium. The training facilities were top class and the session went well. The coaching staff planned two tactical sessions with the focus on getting as organized as possible in preparation for our first match. We returned to the Hotel and ate lunch as a team. Immediately following lunch the team was given time to rest and catch up with the time change. The second session was at 5pm at another local soccer training facility. We rushed from training to the hotel quickly changed and took the bus to downtown Gradisca for the opening ceremonies. Each team was lined up much like the countries do for the Olympics, A youth player from the local San Marcos club held each team's flag or club crest along with a sign with the team name posted to it. The team took many pictures and spoke to players from the different clubs and countries. A live band played after the ceremony before the 10min fireworks show. The entire city stops and takes the streets to celebrate this prestigious world tournament. The highlight of the night was when team captain Jeff Strickland needed to take the stage and read some information on the tournament. He did a great job and represented Region IV well. We returned to the Hotel at 10pm and sent the players to bed. The players coaching staff and administrators are very anxious to take the field for competition. Tomorrow is game day and we hope to continue Region IV's winning tradition at the Torneo Nereo Rocco.

April 25th
Day 3

Immediately after Breakfast the team met to discuss the rules, format and our team goals for the match. We departed for a tactical training session at 11am. The coaching staff focused on getting the team organized and confident for the game vs. SK Karnten from Austria. A pre-game meal was set up for 4pm then departed for the game at 6pm. It had rained the majority of the game so we were expecting the field to be in poor conditions. Once we arrived at the stadium we put our equipment in the locker room and walked the field. The grass was very wet and the soft dirt underneath made it difficult to plant and play. The facility was nice and the host club did a great job accommodating both teams. The game started at a very fast pace and both teams failed to find a rhythm. The Austrian team played very direct and forced their physical game on to Region IV. We played very compact and looked to play off counter attack opportunities. Both teams had chances and failed to convert any of them into goals. The first half ended 0-0 and Region IV had the momentum of the game. We missed numerous chances one of which the keeper made a great save on Anthony Salciccia's shot at the edge of the six yard box. Going into the half time talk head coach Mario Sanches chose not to make any changes for the second half.

I will send the completed Day 3 in the morning!!