

# Getting a kick out of house league soccer



Michael Baltodano winds up for a goal kick during a U-14 scrimmage. (Photo by Andrew Buttigieg)

**By Andrew Buttigieg for The Heart of St. Thomas**  
House league soccer is riding a wave of popularity in St. Thomas.

The St. Thomas Soccer Club is dedicated to making sure that all kids get a chance to play the game they love. At the helm are two seasoned veterans of "the beautiful game."

Youth recreational chairman, Joyce Rose, is in the St. Thomas Soccer Club's Hall of Fame in recognition of more than 25 years of dedication to the club.

Carmen Luft is once again in charge of tournament competition.

"We want the kids to learn the fundamentals of soccer," Carmen explains.



Marco Contardo dribbles the ball towards the opposing goal during a U-14 scrimmage. (Photo by Andrew Buttigieg)

"It's a good social activity for the kids and it keeps them off the streets and away from in front of the television."

This year, the program is comprised of divisions for players as young as four through to women's leagues.

The focus, however, is more on younger players and their constant improvement with the fundamental skills of the game. The youngsters can usually be spotted with a smile on their face, and that's the number 1 goal.

During the season, teams practise for roughly 30 minutes and then compete against an opponent from the same age group.

Each team usually plays twice per week, resulting in a healthy lifestyle for the hundreds and hundreds of kids who participate every year.

"Right now the kids are just practising and scrimmaging," explains Carmen. "Later this month we will split the teams and make them more balanced. Then we can start the regular season."

On the weekends of July 12-13 and 26-27, the girls and boys from the U-11 to U-18 divisions will be able to put what they have learned in the house league program to the test against other house league teams from around the province in a unique house league tournament, now in its 17th season.

The only real difficulty the program faces is a lack of coaches. For example, in the U-14 Boys division, there are four teams but only one coach. The program is looking for parents to get involved with their children's activities and have a fun year, while helping them teach soccer fundamentals.

Teams in the U-4 to U-7 house league program follow a bit of a different

schedule, playing on mini-fields to understand the basic principles of soccer.

The pitches have never looked better and players are anxious to play

throughout the summer.

Cowan Park on St. George Street benefitted from a facelift this year as the drainage system problems that plagued past seasons has now been addressed. The funding came from generous soccer moms who raised much-needed dollars nearly 20 years ago.

A plaque at the front of Cowan Park acknowledges their efforts, noting "The City of St. Thomas acknowledges — The St. Thomas Soccer Moms — for their valuable contributions to Cowan Park — 1990."

Cowan Park once again rings to the sound of young players laughing and meeting new friends, parents with coffee cups in hand, cheering their youngsters on in friendly competition.

The 2008 house league season is underway, and everyone involved is ready to shake loose from the winter doldrums and get back to the business of soccer.

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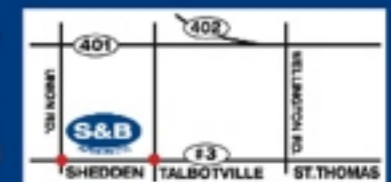
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