

Beumaris Tiger Sharks play at International friendly in Sydney

Does every young 7-year-old dream of playing soccer on an International stage? Well, dreams can come true...in a way.

Luis Perpina from the U7 Beumaris Tiger Sharks entered an online competition for his team to play 'Optus Small Sided Football' soccer at the half time break during the Qantas Socceroos V Netherlands game on Saturday 10th October, 2009. And he won!

Luis and 4 of his team mates; Cees Van Eijk, Sam Strong, Joshua O'Neil and Ben Thompson prepared for a magical weekend away which included airfares and accommodation for the team and of course to play ½ time in front of 40,000 International crowd at Sydney Football Stadium.

After an enjoyable flight the boys were excited to be in Sydney. As they sat in the stadium in their Beumaris team uniform watching the Socceroos, they quickly became subdued as they finally realised the enormity of where they were. Even the parents had butterflies in their stomachs.

The excitement grew as the time came for them to get onto the field. The boys stood tall and proud in their Beumaris jerseys as they walked onto the field.

“ Today, I am proud as a parent, but especially proud as their coach for the day.” Stand in coach George Perpina said as he watched the boys on the field.

Unlike the Socceroos game that night - Beumaris U7 Tiger Sharks and a Sydney U7 team were quick to score. A swift kick in by Joshua saw him take the ball to the wing and boot a right footer goal from an impossible angle. Joshua kicked many skilled goals throughout the season but this goal was by far his finest.

The Sydney team retaliated quickly when a Beumaris kick off from the back line across goal proved fatal, causing Sydney to score. The Tiger Sharks bounced back with another quick goal, this time by Cees – a magnificent strong kick from the back. This was by far Cees' best game of the season!

Luis' fast moves and skilled play saved a goal and helped feed the ball up field while Sam and Ben proved vital midfield in moving the ball around.

The crowd were thrilled to see some scoring action and were impressed with the camaraderie of the teams they saw before them. They had fun, which is what Small Sided Football is all about.

“The boys worked so well as a team. This was by far the best game they have played together. Being on the ground myself, the reaction from the crowd was something I most remember. But the most pleasing thing for me was seeing the true friendship these kids have for each other” says George.

Joe Mottolo – President of the Beumaris Soccer Club and U7 coaches David Jackson and Jason Potts were overjoyed for the boys to have this opportunity.

The Sunday after the game was filled with sightseeing around Sydney, which was a first for many of the boys. All the parents enjoyed seeing the boys have a wonderful time together.

The weekend finished with the sweetest icing on the cake. It just so happened that Luis and his teammates were on the same flight back to Melbourne with some of the Qantas Socceroos.

Mark Schwarzer was wonderful with the boys giving them praise and encouragement, not to mention photos and autographs. Equally, Captain Lucas Neill and Luis' hero, Tim Cahill gave the boys some time before boarding the plane.

This weekend created some magical memories and a bond that the boys will cherish forever.

"I was so excited to win the competition and be in Sydney with my friends." said Luis.

"The highlight of my trip was getting to play on the field at half-time because it was in front of more than 40,000 people. Kicking my goal was awesome and the Tiger Sharks won! It was also my first time on a plane and taxi. It was also my first time in Sydney. I enjoyed going out with my team mates for meals. When I got home on Sunday night, I was exhausted but happy. I will now enter more competitions. It was an exciting and a fantastic experience. I am so glad that Luis picked me." Joshua wrote for his school project.

Kate Gillmer – Marketing Co-Ordinator from Football Australia says "I hope the boys continue to enjoy their football for many years to come."

Who knows, maybe this is the first of many soccer trips for them all!

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