



Fraser Valley Soccer League



September 5, 2018 media@fraservalleysoccer.com

From the Media Desk of the Fraser Valley Soccer League...

A brand-new season of the Umbro Premier League is about to get underway in the Fraser Valley Soccer League. Eight teams will once more compete in the FVSL's top tier as they vie for the league title as well as berths to represent the league in the Provincial Cup come March. Due to internal restructuring, longtime member's Aldergrove Utd will not have a team in the UPL this season. Their absence has opened up a spot for a new team, Temple Vancouver United, who will compete in the FVSL for the first time.

All teams will open the season on Sunday September 9, at Newton Athletic Park.

Abbotsford Utd. (2017/18 Season: 5th)

After narrowly missing out on the Provincial Cup places last season when they were bumped thanks to Aldergrove winning the Pakenham Cup, Abbotsford United will be seeking a better fate this time around. Under the stewardship of Mike Leclerc, Abby have become entrenched in the FVSL's top flight, though other than a runner up finish in the 2014/15 season, United generally find themselves in mid-table, scrapping it out for a seat at the Provincial Cup table. This season may be even more difficult for the team in the Eastern part of the Fraser Valley to find a ticket to the season end dance as the team enters a period of transition. Both their top scorers from the 2017/18 are said to have departed the club, including FVSL Golden Boot winner, Daniel Davidson. That sort of fire power is not easy to replace, but Abby will look to a new crop of players to carry the weight for this proud club. Their U21 side finished as narrow runners up to their local rivals from Abbotsford Soccer Association and their "B" side won a very competitive Division 2 title, so perhaps the pieces are already there within the club to reinvigorate the flagship squad. Maybe some fresh faces and renewed desire can ultimately propel the club to even greater heights.

Outlook: Given the upheaval and turnover, Abbotsford will need to focus on talking care of business against the teams that traditionally finish below them in the table, so as not to get dragged into a relegation battle. Depending on the number of berths allocated to the FVSL for the Provincial A Cup, a berth in the tournament is not necessarily out of the quest, but it may be a stretch for this season.

Burnaby Firefighters (2017/18 Season: 8th)

Burnaby were debutants last season after running away with Division 1 during the 2016/17 campaign. However, a very poor start to the season put them behind the eight-ball early on and they never recovered, finishing the season dead last and with only a single win and two draws to show for their efforts. They were spared relegation though thanks in large part to Aldergrove's departure, along with some divisional realignment. They still had to see off Division 1 promotion hopefuls Westcoast FC, but old habit kicked in against lower league opposition and Firefighters got the job done. Therefore, led by manager Todd MacNeil, the Burnaby boys are back for another kick at the can (as well as, presumably, the ball). They will be expecting better from their sophomore campaign and have spurred a recruitment drive West of the Fraser River. Safety from relegation based on teams dropping out and league



Fraser Valley Soccer League



restructuring is a very dangerous gambit to rely on, so priority number one for this group will be establishing safety based on their own performance.

Outlook: Taking points off the big boys would send a great message to the rest of the league that Burnaby have learned their lessons from their inaugural campaign and would no doubt boost morale internally as well. However, their season is likely to boil down to their results in their massive head to head “six point” showdowns with fellow pre-season relegation candidates Chilliwack and Temple.

Chilliwack FC (2017/18 Season: 7th)

Since joining the FVSL’s top flight for the 2015/16 season, Chilliwack have yet to finish in the top half of the table. Still though, they have done enough to survive year after year, one way or another, and this has allowed them to establish their program and begin to grow. Of course, their hand selected home kickoff time of 8pm Friday nights on the far East side of the Fraser Valley often helps to prop up their results by adding a slight homefield advantage (last season they were 3-3-5 at home, compared to 2-1-7 on the road, which accounted for 64% of their points total). Credit to Graeme Slee for picking up the torch and persevering with this group, and as the talent pool slowly continue to migrate out towards them, surely the best is yet to come for this club.

Outlook: The mostly likely scenario is yet another relegation battle for Chilliwack, though they are certainly veterans of the great escape and know what it takes to keep their heads above water. On the other hand, if everything goes right, and the Fraser Valley has enough berths, a Provincial Cup place might just be attainable.

Coastal FC (2017/18 Season: 1st)

At the end of a somewhat convoluted journey involving North Delta SC, the Vancouver Metro Soccer League and an overhaul at Coastal FC, this group, piloted by the often effervescent Corrado Lenzi, arrived back in the FVSL for the 2017/18 season. Their return was a dream reunion as the result could not have gone better, with Coastal doing the league and cup double, winning both the Umbro Premier League as well as the Soccer City UPL Cup. Now, the defending champions are set to defend their crown and will turn once more to their talisman Jake Starheim who looks to follow up an all-star caliber season and Nations Cup title with Africa, with even more trophies. Albeit, the trophy this group are really chasing is the Provincial Cup. For all their successes in the FVSL, this group has had to watch FVSL teams other than themselves, Aldergrove in 2017 and Langley this past spring in 2018, reach the final of the Province’s showpiece tournament. While domestic success is always nice, this team will be looking to peak come March.

Outlook: The defending champions will be a powerhouse, but, ultimately, would likely trade league and cup success for the chance to win the biggest prize of all. Expect them to be in the conversation for every trophy available to them.



Fraser Valley Soccer League



Langley United (2017/18 Season: 2nd)

Langley have finished as runners up in consecutive seasons, but showed their pedigree by reaching the Provincial Cup Final in May. On that day they lost a heartbreaker in extra-time but represented themselves, as well as the entire FVSL, with aplomb. The question now becomes, where does that leave long time club stalwart Mike Wagner and his players now? Are they hungry for more? Or was 2018 just a bright, brief flash of brilliance, like a comet across the night sky? Provincial Cup Final MVP Ellie-William Gindo has departed the club, but United have been infused with several of the players from the recently folded Aldergrove Utd. squad, including former TSS Rover Connor Hildebrant. Connor was rumoured to have other playing options across the Lower Mainland as well as in Europe, but Langley have seemingly secured his signature, at least to begin the season. Backstopped by all-star keeper Andrew Hicks, Langley has the potential to be a powerhouse once more.

Outlook: If the desire is there this team should once more challenge for the league title as well as be a contender in the cup competitions. Much like Coastal however, their season will really start in March as they look to prove 2018 was no fluke at all.

Port Moody SC (2017/18 Season: 4th)

Under the stewardship of new joint coaches Thomas Mills and Rus Huggon, as well as manager Larry Moro, Port Moody will be looking to cast off the shackles of their seemingly perennial mid-table finish and look to challenge the top teams in the Umbro Premier League for silverware. An extensive offseason recruiting campaign has netted them, among others, both Jon and Josh Craig as well as goalkeeper Miguel Hof. Jon Craig is a two-time FVSL Golden Boot winner and Miguel Hof spent last season as the starting goalkeeper for SFU's varsity program. These new faces will look to spur last season's fourth placed side higher up the table. The excitement is in the air out in the Tri-Cities with this revamped side keen to get the season underway and prove to everyone that they have what it takes to be title contenders.

Outlook: A Provincial Cup spot is the bare minimum for this group who would likely consider the season a slight disappointment if they did not win some silverware somewhere along the way. If everything goes right they might even find themselves within sniffing distance of the league title come February.

Surrey Utd. Firefighters (2017/18 Season: 3rd)

After over a decade away in the Vancouver Metro Soccer League and some glory years of winning Provincial Cup Championships, Surrey United felt that the club was in a transition. In order to best establish a new foundation for the club, SU returned home to the FVSL for the 2016/17 season. Their feelings around the need for a rebuild were proven correct when, after spending years as seemingly perennial title contenders, they failed to qualify for the Provincial Cup during that season for the first time in recent memory. Fast forward one season and Surrey were back at the dance, losing a tough opening round match in penalties to league rivals Langley. This year the team, led by Tom Duncan, will look to continue that rebuild by taking the next step and competing once more for trophies on a regular basis. To that end they have secured the serviced of goalkeeper Nuno Jesus whose play helped guide Aldergrove to the Umbro Premier League title and the Provincial Cup Final in 2017, as well as the



Fraser Valley Soccer League



Pakenham Cup last season. Surrey will also hope to see goal scorer Sean Einarsson return after he completes his USport season as UBC, whom he has agreed to rejoin for their 2018 university season.

Outlook: If everything goes right this team should be comfortably in the top half, qualified for the Provincial Cup and, potentially, challenging for trophies. If it all goes wrong then they may find themselves in a battle to avoid another year on the outside looking in of the Provincial Cup.

Temple Vancouver United (2017/18 Season: N/A)

The newest members of the FVSL and the Umbro Premier League are Temple Vancouver United. Longtime FVSL cornerstone club Temple have struck a partnership with Vancouver United Sports Club, a Surrey based club founded by former professional players and coaches from India. Vancouver United Sports Club (not to be confused with Vancouver United Football Club, based in the UBC/Kerrisdale area of Vancouver) has in the past, focused primarily on youth soccer. This latest venture into men's football is spearheaded by Gurvinder Mahil, who is listed as Director of Vancouver United. This team will be a wild card in the division, coming from outside of the known adult soccer landscape. Rumors have swirled about possibly attracting talent from a local Vancouver Metro Soccer League Division 1 team and their affiliation with Temple may allow them access to veteran FVSL players who are a part of Temple's Master's Premier side. Still, until the first ball is kicked it is tough to know what to make of this team.

Outlook: Like all new teams, survival is surely the first priority for Temple Vancouver United. Many other teams have trod a similar path from perceived obscurity to the Umbro Premier League, only to find that the UPL is not for the faint of heart. Can this new side rise to the challenge? Or will they vanish into memory like so many who have come before them? Only time will tell.

Opening week schedule for the Umbro Premier League:

All games Sunday September 9 at Newton Athletic Park – Grass Fields #8 & #9

2pm – Langley Utd. vs. Burnaby Firefighters

2pm – Port Moody SC vs. Chilliwack FC

4pm – Abbotsford Utd. vs. Surrey Utd. Firefighters

4pm – Coastal FC vs. Temple Vancouver United

Send NEWS to media@fraservalleysoccer.com

And for more information on the FVSL go to fraservalleysoccer.com



Fraser Valley Soccer League

