

Under 11 Thunder meeting demands

It was, by all accounts, a very demanding start to a soccer season.

The under-11 Ancaster Thunder girls Select team plunged headfirst into the 2005 season last weekend by competing in the under-13 age division at the Ancaster Heritage Days Soccer Tournament, an event that returned to the local scene for the first time in two years.

Against girls often a foot taller and strengthened by two extra years of growth, the under-11 girls battled hard in the sweltering conditions, extracting two hard-earned draws in four games, with goaltenders Julia Shen and Monica Lutz surrendering only a total of seven goals in those matches.

"We were pushed hard by the older girls," said a very pleased head coach Paul Buchanan, ably assisted by coaches Bruce McDonald and Dale Bott. "Our girls acquitted themselves well, competing and often beating the older, bigger girls in game situations. It was an experience that should help them in our upcoming tournaments when we compete against teams our own age."

In all, 32 teams entered the Ancaster event in four girls divisions and two boys divisions, with organizers hoping to gradually build the competition into the best in Ontario over the next few years.

The absence of other under-11 teams, however, forced Buchanan's feisty girls to compete in a three-team group with Ancaster's talented under-13 team, as well as a hardworking, green-clad Lincoln Storm squad.

In the first game against Lincoln, Hayley Buchanan scored for the under-11s in a tough 1-1 draw with Lincoln. Later in the day, the under-13 Ancaster team dominated their younger fellow citizens in a 4-0 win.

That, however, didn't cause any loss of spirit or faith. On the second day, the under-11s suffered a 1-0 loss to Lincoln in the morning, but then bounced back in style, with Hayley Buchanan again supplying the only goal in an impressive 1-1 draw with the older Ancaster girls.

That result prevented the under-11s from getting to the final, but left them with a strong feeling of accomplishment for competing so impressively against older, talented girls. Up front, Hayley Buchanan, Delaney Cox, Monica Lutz, Maggie MacDonald, Lindsay Nedelko and Victoria Pappas were tireless on the attack, while Rachael Holmes, Harley Morrison, Ally Scione, Lauren Zaitz and Julia Shen supported well in mid-field and Lauren Bott, Heather Bradley, Kyla Carroll, Victoria Mazzarolo, Alex McCord, Jenna Pryde and Kara Zuccato combined to build a consistent defensive shield in front of the Ancaster net. The team missed Devon Morrison who was on vacation.

The Ancaster girls are looking forward to heading to Youngstown, New York for the Niagara Pioneer League international tournament in mid-July.

Picture description:

Heritage Days #1: Ancaster midfielder Lauren Zaitz (#3) prepares to challenge Lincoln attacker.

Heritage Days #2: Ancaster Thunder under-11 goalie Monica Lutz boots the ball to safety as defenders Lauren Bott (#2) and Alexandra McCord (#15) look on.

Heritage Days #3: Ancaster forward Delaney Cox (#7) takes throw-in from teammate Julia Shen (#5).