

# Thunder takes its show on the road

*It was, after weeks of practices and tough games, time to take the show on the road.*

*The Ancaster Thunder under-11 girls soccer team did just that in early July, crossing the border into New York State for the prestigious Niagara Pioneer Tournament, a chance to test their skills and will against top-flight American squads.*

*It wasn't easy, and the Thunder didn't get to where they wanted to, namely the final.*

*But in winning two of three games over the course of the July 9-10 event, and in doing so while missing four key players due to vacation and two others for part of the weekend due to other commitments, this was a soccer team that proved emphatically it is more than simply the sum of its parts.*

*The personnel shortages meant that coach Paul Buchanan needed to find reinforcements and ask players to play positions and fill roles which they had never been asked to do before.*

*Emma Buchanan joined the Thunder from the under-9 Ancaster girls team to provide some extra legs, while Heather Bradley stepped up to tend goal on the second day of the event when stalwart keeper Monica Lutz was unavailable after playing very well on the first day.*

*The tournament, held in Youngstown, N.Y., included 142 teams from five states and Canada in 14 age divisions, was played on 19 fields at the Fort Niagara State Park and was not only the first road tournament of the season, but for many of the girls was their first overnight competition away from home.*

*Right from the start, the task was tough. The Thunder had to face Irondequoit, near Rochester, along with two Buffalo-area teams, Grand Island and Wilson. All three clubs play in select leagues, meaning they were bound to provide challenging competition.*

*In the first game against Grand Island, Lauren Zaitz got the Thunder started in a perfect way, scoring a gorgeous individual goal to create an early 1-0 edge. Grand Island tied the game just before halftime, and then proved to be the more opportunistic team in the second half by coming up with three goals despite facing a fierce Ancaster attack.*

*"The girls continued to try and fight back but we just couldn't finish off some promising chances," said coach Buchanan.*

*Against Wilson in the next game, the girls proved that the opening defeat had not compromised their spirit. Zaitz and Hayley Buchanan came up with goals on pretty passing plays, while Lutz and Julia Shen provided perfect goalkeeping and some good clearance kicks in a 2-0 triumph. The defence led by Jenna Pryde, Lauren Bott and Ally Scione, played particularly well with tireless efforts also from Heather Bradley, Kyla Carroll and Victoria Mazzorolo.*

*Then the job got even tougher.*

*Four players – Alex McCord, Devon Morrison, Victoria Pappas and Kara Zuccato – were unavailable for the entire weekend, and after the first two matches the Thunder found themselves without Lutz and forward Delaney Cox for the critical Sunday contest against Irondequoit.*

*The girls proved that they were up to the combined challenges of the competition and the travel by playing very well in a 1-0 victory, with Rachael Holmes potting the only goal on a well-placed free kick. But because Irondequoit had beaten Grand Island 2-1 earlier, the Thunder needed to win by at least two goals, and an inability to cash in on a flurry of chances in the second half against Irondequoit meant their weekend came to an end after three games.*

*"We were disappointed not to be moving on, but we were really pleased how the girls responded," said coach Buchanan. "We paid the price for not finishing our chances."*

*The coaching staff noted the strong play of mid-fielders Maggie McDonald and Harley Morrison, while attacker Lindsay Nedelko was a key part of the offence that created multiple scoring chances throughout the weekend.*

*The Thunder's next tournament is the Mississauga All-Star competition on the first weekend of August.*

**Picture description:**

Front Row: Maggie MacDonald, Harley Morrison, Kyla Carroll

1st Row: Julia Shen, Victoria Mazzarolo, Monica Lutz, Heather Bradley, Hayley Buchanan

2nd Row: Rachael Holmes, Lauren Zaitz, Ally Scione, Lauren Bott, Jenna Pryde, Delaney Cox, Lindsay Nedelko

Back Row: Coaches Bruce MacDonald, Paul Buchanan and Dale Bott