

Sports! Sports! Sports! Sports!

Big-up organizers of Belize District Football Little League

by Charles X

BELIZE CITY, Thurs. Aug. 9, 2007

There are some silent heroes in Belize that often go unnoticed, but I cornered two such fine gentlemen this afternoon, and demanded a picture of them, so that I can share this "big up" with sports fans. Phillip Murray is a teacher at Holy Redeemer primary school and Mario Rodriguez teaches at St. Ignatius primary school in Belize City. Together they have been selflessly leading the effort, along with a number of other exemplary citizens, in executing a fine football tournament for youths across the Belize District. They willingly gave me some insight into the League and its competition.

This Saturday, August 11, at the Hostel field adjacent to the Racoon Street Police Station in Queen Square, Belize City, the quarterfinal playoffs begin in the Belize District Football Little League U-13 tournament. For the past five weekends, five games have been played each Saturday at a selected venue featuring the youngsters, mostly school children on holidays, participating in an under 13 competition. This first year of the Little League in the Belize District got off to a rocky start, as organizers had to speed up preparations to coincide with the closing of primary schools for the holidays this year.

Football fans who may be a little bored on Saturdays, especially since the professional league season is not on right now, could treat themselves to an interesting outing, seeing the young talents of tomorrow's stars in their early stages of development. Parents in particular should make the effort to support their kids with their presence at the games.

Twelve teams were originally registered for the competition, nine from the City and three from the villages of Maskall, Sandhill and Ladyville; but one City team, St. Martin's, for unknown reasons, failed to make an appearance. The other City teams include St. Ignatius, Raiders, Rest a di World, Brown Bombers, Jane Usher Blvd., BYFA Raptors, Caesar Ridge and Back-a-Town. One team had to rest each week, since, with the exit of St. Martin's, the field was down to eleven.

Now there are eight teams qualified to the quarterfinal playoffs this Saturday, and it's a do or die situation, with the losers dropping out and the winners going to the semifinals, which follows a similar format, next Saturday. The



(L-r) Mario Rodriguez and Phillip Murray

games from here on will therefore have added intensity, especially coming from the coaches and fans, some of whom are well known veterans or still active players, since nobody wants their team to drop out. The finals the following week, however, will be a best of two games series. The games begin at 10:00 a.m. this Saturday, and game 1 features Raiders vs Caesar Ridge; game 2 is Maskall vs Ladyville Jaguars; game 3, Sandhill vs Brown Bombers; and game 4, Jane Usher Blvd. vs Back-a-Town. All the games are 25 minute halves, for a 50 minute total, instead of the regular 90 minutes in adult games.

There are a number of other praiseworthy individuals involved in this new league that involves a lot of voluntary effort on the part of organizers, referees, team coaches, and most importantly, the major sponsorship of a set of twelve team uniforms and six footballs per team by the Belize Cultural Foundation of Los Angeles.

Last year the Foundation assisted in the formation of a Little League in Corozal. This year, they have expanded their assistance to include the Belize and Orange Walk districts. A total of 48 Little League teams this year were provided with uniforms and footballs, and plans are to expand the program to the Cayo, Stann Creek and Toledo districts. In addition, the Foundation also provided the Belize District Football Little League with five sets of referee uniforms. So far the referees have also been performing voluntarily.

This Little League is apparently set on a strong foundation, pun intended. The L.A. Foundation, through a Mr. Brooks, also provided copies of the constitution and tournament rules for a youth football association in L.A., and the late Sir George Brown reviewed and assisted in making the necessary adaptations for our situation in Belize, which were minimal, according to Messrs Murray and Rodriguez. The League therefore has its own constitution and set of competition rules. It is their belief that this has helped in making their competition run smoothly with no major problems so far.

The late Sir George Brown was President Emeritus of the Belize District Football Little League at the time of his passing. Mr. Phillip Murray (Holy

Redeemer) is the President; Mr. Mario Rodriguez (St. Ignatius) is Executive Vice-President; Vice-President of Registration is Mr. Kent Young (Sandhill); Vice-President of Scheduling and Score Keeping is Mr. Stanley "Jordan" Reneau; Vice-President of Training and Technical Affairs is Mr. Marvin Ottley; Secretary is Ms. Sharett Gentle (Belize Youth Football Academy - BYFA); and Treasurer is Mr. Haden Ottley (Raiders).

The League also has other plans. A knockout competition, involving the teams that are eliminated from the present competition, will commence next week, even while the semifinals are being played. This is to keep the boys involved and happy. A U-15 male and female competition is being planned to commence in October; preparation and registration will take place during August and September. A U-17 competition will then commence in January '08, with preparation and registration occurring during November and December. There is also a U-13 Easter Camp being planned for next year.

It's been a long time coming, the proper organization of youth football by age group in Belize, and football fans, who have long been clamoring for action in this area from the FFB, will feel a sense of hope, as I did, when they attend these games. With no assistance so far from the FFB, a number of Belizean patriots at home, with the outstanding support of donors from the Belize Cultural Foundation of Los Angeles, have been quietly laying the groundwork for resurrecting the structure and quality of football in Belize.

Come to Hostel on Saturday, City fans, and see the kids in action.

Unitedville Hot Mama's to Central American Softball Championship

BELIZE CITY, Tues. Aug. 7, 2007

Unitedville Hot Mama's, the National Softball Champion of Belize, will represent Belize at the 6th Central American Senior Female Softball Championship scheduled for Esteli, Nicaragua, from August 16 to 19, 2007.

The 2nd Vice President of the Belize Softball Federation, Mr. Renison

Tablada, will head the delegation.

Unitedville Hot Mama's will join the defending champion, Marte Lotin of El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and host country Nicaragua in the single round robin competition.

The team is expected to return home on Tuesday, August 21.

- press release -

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