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# CLEVELAND CITY STARS



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## CLEVELAND CITY STARS COACH MARTIN RENNIE IS USL-2 COACH OF THE YEAR

*Tuesday, August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007*

**CLEVELAND, OHIO** Martin Rennie's Green & White Army would undoubtedly have cheered as Cleveland City Stars Head Coach Martin Rennie was honored as the United Soccer League Second Division Coach of the Year. He accomplished in one season what many Cleveland professional teams have not done in decades. Rennie took the fledgling team to the semi-finals and ended the year with the fewest losses of any team in the league. He also helped his team earn a bid to the Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup tournament after only four games, a tournament that many teams have never qualified for, and an honor in itself to be a part of let alone so early in a club's history.



Six months ago this team did not exist. Now they boast the USL-2 Coach of the Year (Martin Rennie), Defender of the Year (Mark Schulte), the top Goals Against Average Keeper in the league (Hunter Gilstrap), two USL-2 All-League Team selectees (Mark Schulte and Adam Moffat) and two Player of the Week honorees from the regular season (Hunter Gilstrap and Nigel Codrington). In addition, every week throughout the summer, the Stars had at least one player included in the Team of the Week. It truly is a team of Stars.

But Rennie had the job of pulling it all together. In the pre-season, the City Stars scrimmaged with a Columbus Crew squad down at the Crew practice facility. They lost 7-0. There were some encouraging signs, but the Stars clearly had a lot of work to do. Over the next few weeks Rennie and his then assistant coach, Jake DeClute, began crafting a team that would end the regular season with 39 points, just two points behind the table leader. The Stars stood 10-1-9 with a record breaking number of ties and only one loss, a feat that has been accomplished only three other times in the history of the league.



The Stars began their campaign on the road with three games away before their first match in front of the home crowd. After facing the Cincinnati Kings twice and another expansion team, Crystal Palace Baltimore, the City Stars returned to Cleveland with 9 points and a 3-0-0 record.

At the home opener Cleveland City Stars fans were treated to an exhilarating night of soccer. Five goals were scored with the game winner being put in by Adam Moffat with only seconds left to play. Clearly the CCS fans liked what they saw because they kept coming back. Home games averaged over 1,500 fans in attendance which is the best turnout for an expansion team in the USL-2.

The next five games earned the Stars 3 ties and 2 wins and another 9 points. Now with 21 points and sitting solidly in the top third of the table, the Stars headed into Charlotte for the second game of a double header weekend. Nothing went Cleveland's way that night. It was just one of those games where Cleveland couldn't catch a break. They hit the post, they sent the ball inches over the cross bar, they curved the ball just wide of the goal and they had two scores called back for offsides. On another night it may have been different, but

the Stars lefts Charlotte with the bad taste of defeat in their mouths, and decided they didn't like it at all. Unfortunately, they would have to wait until they returned home to find their winning stride again.

On several occasions fans turned up at away games in mass. The Cincinnati Kings and Harrisburg City Islanders games in particular had large groups of Green Army enlistees as well as other pockets of CCS fans. And when the Stars headed to Richmond for the first time to face the Kickers in the second round of the Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup after defeating the Kansas City Brass in the first round, a road trip was organized to make sure the Stars were well represented. Unfortunately the Stars left with a heartbreaking 2-1 loss, their second in two games, and returned home to try to get their season back on track.



The City Stars were undefeated for the remainder of the summer. They played to a 1-1 draw five times, won four games and earned a 0-0 draw once in the final 10 games. In fact, the Stars scored at least one goal in all but 3 of their 20 regular season matches and gave up the fewest goals in the league with only 14 on the year.

The emotionally and physically draining final match of the season against Harrisburg did not go the way it was supposed to. Cleveland was supposed to win their playoff match and face the Richmond Kickers for the last time down in Richmond where they would finally earn the victory that they were capable of all year and be crowned Champions in their inaugural season. But that is why they play the games. It doesn't always work out the way it is supposed to.



In fact, after beating the Stars in overtime, the Harrisburg City Islanders marched into Richmond and played them to a draw at the end of regulation and overtime forcing a shootout. In that so unpredictable of all endeavors, the City Islanders did what no one expected. They walked away with the victory and the championship, defeating the reigning champion Richmond Kickers in their own house and proving that part of what makes the game so exciting is that anything can happen.

With tremendous gratitude to the fans and the City of Cleveland, the City Stars head into the off season with only one thing on their minds – a championship. They gave the fans a taste of what is to come. They exceeded expectations on every front and have set the

standard very high. It bodes well for soccer in Cleveland. And as all Cleveland sports fans know, there is always next year.

The Cleveland City Stars look forward to playing again at Krenzler in front of the home crowd to the chants of the Green Army and the frenzied Cleveland fans. With the addition of the Web cast, Cleveland City Stars fans may also be able to keep up with the minute by minute action of away games as well. There are also many volunteer opportunities for anyone who would like to get more involved. Check out the website or call the office at 216-916-6586 to find out how you can become part of the team.

The Stars also hope to reach more inner city kids with their continued efforts off the field. This year, Cleveland City Stars players gave over 600 hours of their time to work with more than 1200 kids in some of the roughest neighborhoods in Cleveland. They also hosted several soccer clinics and camps this season, one in conjunction with players from the Charlotte Eagles which hosted 300 kids from surrounding communities.





The Stars look forward to building on the Charity Partnerships they established this year with Crystal Palace Baltimore, the Richmond Kickers and the Bermuda Hogges. Soccer really can change the world and the Stars will undoubtedly be a part of that success.

Don't forget to look up the CCS website [www.clevelandcitystars.com](http://www.clevelandcitystars.com) for up to date news, all the off-season events, CCS camps & clinics and player appearances. Season tickets are already on sale and could make an incredible Christmas gift. Don't miss out.

