

Soccer Fans Must Speak-out for soccer in the Media

Canada-US Women's Game draws Pro Canadian Crowd

By John DeBenedictis

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A sold out crowd attended the Canada – US women's match at Varsity Stadium on Saturday night, which ended in an exciting and hard-fought 2-2 draw. The game was exceptional because of the entertainment value it offered its fans. Some great passing by the Americans and quick counter attacks by the Canadian with many attempts to shoot at goal made the game very exciting. Throw in a few brilliant saves, a couple of goal posts and 4 goals, all before a record crowd of over 9,000. That was the largest crowd to ever witness a female soccer game in Canada. That's news. To see many young soccer players, especially females all decked out in their own team gear waving the Canadian flag was a great sight to see. The women played with all they had and seem so pure in their efforts to play the game competitively and fairly. No fake injuries or countless stoppages in play. The game flowed beautifully.

The game was sold out a few days prior to the event and the team rosters included all the famous US players that covered our papers in 1999 during the Women's World Cup. But even with all this, the media hype for the game was practically non existent. On the way to the game I tuned into Toronto's all news station, AM680 making sure I would not encounter some last minute traffic tie-ups. As is normal, this station covers news very well but when it got to sports I was eager to hear what they had to say about the game.

When the sports report came on, first I heard about the Blue Jays, then about Wimbledon, then about a hockey free agent signing, and then about the indoor arena football Toronto Phantoms, which draw about 500 people per game. Next came a story about golf, then a story about European Football (US football style), a NBA player signing, and then something about the Toronto Maple Leafs minor league baseball game. Then it ended. I was shocked. A sold out game of our National Soccer team with the powerful and popular Americans was not even mentioned.

I was furious and did something I had never done before. I called the station while on the cell phone, checking over my shoulder for a police officer. I asked for the sports department. I was connected rather quickly and got right to the sports guy who just read his news clip. I complained about his report and the lack of coverage of this important game. I reminded him that it was sold out and that there are fans that are interested in the game. His reply, I had to fit in all the other stories and had no more time. He claimed he did mention it in his last report and will in the next one. I stated that this game is sold out and should be mentioned in every report since it was important to all lot of people.

On the way home, I listened to the same station and once again, after listening to scores from all over the place, I could not believe the score of the Canada US women's game was not even mentioned. This was only a few hours after the game. Does this station not care about soccer or women's sports? What's the problem? I'm the first to admit that when soccer fans don't support their pro teams with bums in seats we can't expect the media to make much of any game, but with a sold out crowd, the people are speaking loud and clear and they want more information about their team. A mention or a score would be nice.

We need to speak loud and clear in such cases. The only way to do so is to call your local station or newspaper and complain. Each call represents a much larger number to them and if they get enough, then the message will be clear that enough people do care about the sport. So if you're a soccer fan and were not happy with the media coverage, please phone or write and complain about the lack of coverage. We need to act now while we actually had a big pro Canadian crowd. Check your local phone book for numbers and help speak out for soccer.