

KICK OFF FOR CANADIAN SOCCER



Yuri Nikiforov of the Soviet Union was the hero of the day July 25, scoring both goals in his team's 2-1 victory over Nigeria in the final round of the Under-16 World Cup Soccer Championships.

The second goal clinched a penalty-kick round that followed 80 minutes of regulation play and 20 tense minutes of overtime.

Nikiforov went on to share the Golden Shoe award with Moussa Traore of Ivory Coast, the other top goal-scorer in the 16-nation tournament. Philip Osondu of Nigeria received the Golden Ball award as the tournament's top player.

The championship, held July 12 to 25 in Toronto; Montreal; Saint John, New Brunswick; and St. John's,

Newfoundland was the first international soccer tournament ever to take place in Canada. Participating countries included Australia,

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Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Italy, Ivory Coast, Mexico, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, the Soviet Union, and the United States.

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has steadily consisted of hockey, baseball, and football. Today, however, the sport is played by more Canadian youngsters than hockey, baseball and football put together, and the cream of this young crop has provided Canadian soccer with the much-needed boost it requires.

While the Canadian team was defeated in the first round of the 31-game tournament, the Canadian Soccer Association (CSA) is pleased with the publicity the games received, and with the enthusiastic response from Canadian audiences. The response "was nothing short of spectacular, and we're hoping that will translate into more public support for our domestic programs," says CSA Executive Director Kevan Pipe.

The success of the World Cup Under-16 tournament has heightened Canadian interest in soccer.

According to Pipe, the primary benefit of a tournament like the Under-16s is "along the lines of promotion, and the type of attention you focus on your sport over an extended period of time." After seeing 118 000 ecstatic fans in four cities attend the championships, and receiving good coverage from Canada's cable television sports network, the CSA is looking forward to wider public participation in soccer events.