

Dazzle edge Mighty Ducks in youth soccer action. (May 12, 2009)

It was a very bright, sunny afternoon in Aiken as the purple-clad Mighty Ducks looked to take the shine off the golden jerseys of the Dazzle (at least we think that's what they were called). The U-9 Aiken Recreational Soccer League is known to have an exciting brand of soccer and Tuesday's game lived up to the hype.

The teams started 7 VS 7, switched to 8 VS 8 in the first quarter, and ended 9 VS 9 when all the players finally arrived. The coaching staff of both teams could not be contained to the sidelines as they could be found on the field, on the other end of the field, and even standing beside the goal directing their players in action.

Finding it difficult to deal with the very direct style of play (boom ball) used by the Dazzle, the Mighty Ducks were down 2-0 at the half. The Ducks game of short passing (bee-hive) just wasn't able to unlock the strong Dazzle defense. The second half found the Ducks able to threaten the Dazzle goal but unable to finish on several chances created by a mixture of long and short passing.

With the loss the Ducks fall to 1-5-2 on the season...but they'll remind you they still have three make-up games.

High school teammates at Aiken High School, the Ducks coaching staff, has stepped up to the challenges of the U-9 Aiken Recreational Soccer League. The players on the Ducks call their coaches things like "supportive, a great goalie, and funny" while the coaches are credited with "kicking the ball really high and being on time" all great comments by the 8 year old Ducks.

But to Bulls Soccer Club members Sarah Bryan (U17 girls Red) and Whitney Undertilo (U18 girls Red), the U-9 league was a great way to give back to the game and coach the future soccer stars of Aiken.

"The biggest challenge is that the players don't keep their positions," said Sarah when asked about the team. Whitney added "the player's attention span" has been the biggest challenge to her. Sarah has a very simple solution of "let them go crazy" when the positions get mixed up while Whitney uses "patience and repeating myself" to deal with the short attention spans.

When asked about what they've gained by coaching the team, Whitney could see she "works with kids a little bit better" while Sarah counted "responsibility, leadership, and a stronger yelling voice" as things she's gained with the team.

The Bulls Soccer Club believes in "Success through Education" and the U-9 players on the Ducks were the only team at Citizen's Park Tuesday night to not have a parent-filled coaching staff. How valuable is it to the Ducks to learn the game of soccer from outstanding youth soccer players? How valuable is it for the coaches to share the game with the next generation while learning another side of the game? Both groups were winners on Tuesday night.

The GA-SC Bulls are proud of the Mighty Duck's coaching staff and hope more older Bulls players give back to the game coaching and instructing tomorrow's soccer stars. You just might learn something by coaching.