

SPORTS AND LEISURE

Sky's the limit for soccer mania



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/ROB ALARY

Local soccer clubs struggle to accommodate sport's popularity

BY JOHN CUDMORE
Staff Writer

For the next month, all the world is a pitch. While much of the world holds its breath in anticipation as soccer's World Cup unfolds in Japan and South Korea beginning tomorrow, a dilemma faces local leaders of the globe's most popular sport: How much success can the sport stand at the local level? Sure as star players will embel-

lish fouls in the weeks ahead, it is a lead-pipe cinch there will be another upward spike in soccer registration across Canada in 2003.

For officials administering soccer programs already bursting at the seams, in some cases capping registration for certain divisions, that presents a problem.

Much has been made of the fact soccer has surpassed hockey in recent years as Canada's most popular sport, at least in terms of registered players. But, as the one-two punch of Canadian sports, hockey and soccer share common ground — an acute shortage of facilities.

"The number 1 priority is facilities from the viewpoint of train-

ing, lighting, everything," said Ontario Soccer Association executive director Brian Avey, who claims projections for this year are 350,000 registered players in Ontario alone.

"We're trying to get on municipalities' agendas because it takes long-term planning to get facilities.

"A lot of clubs are starting to look at co-partnering with their local municipality. Some clubs are taking the initiative."

One such program is the Newmarket Soccer Club, which purchased 42 acres last year with an eye toward developing the land for outdoor and year-round soccer facilities.

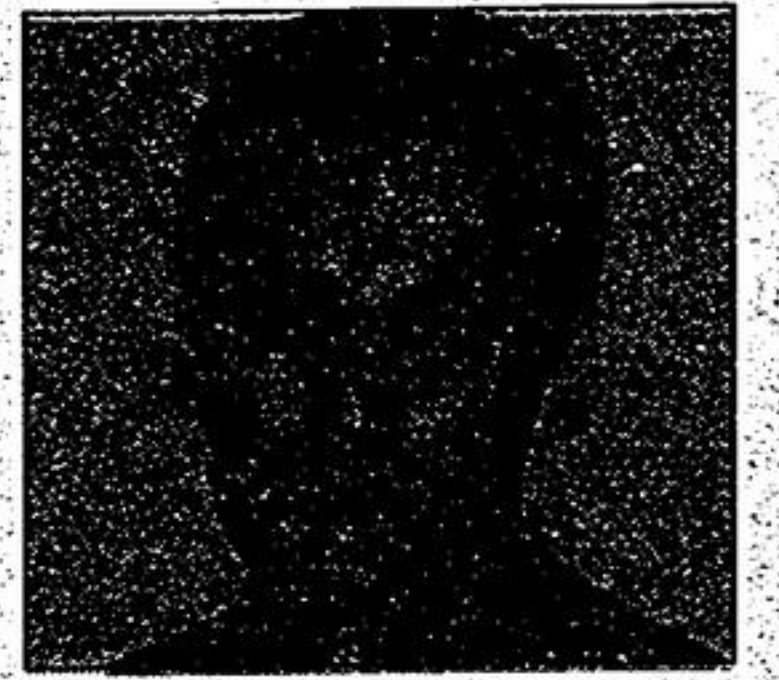
NSC president Bill Condy said

his club experienced 20-per-cent growth after the 1998 World Cup in France. Expectations are there will be a significant surge in numbers next season after this year's spectacle.

"There will be another increase and, especially on the male side, (soccer) will have even more cachet than hockey," said Mr. Condy, whose club is capped at approximately 4,700 members.

"Kids are starting to see a path now to get to the Manchester Uniteds and top Italian teams, the top levels like hockey. There really hasn't been that co-relation in the past."

See **SOCER**, page 26.



Patrick Mangion

Been There, Done That Pipe dreams go off track at 'sick' park

Skateboarding is a lot like golf. It's true one is steeped in tradition and etiquette, while the other laughs in the face of such ideals.

After climbing back into the saddle, or in this case a plank of wood with wheels, I couldn't remember the last time I had to sign a waiver, wear a helmet, risk breaking bones or sport fresh road rash to chase a little white ball around.

But 20-year-old Todd Hohberger, skateboarder extraordinaire and instructor at the Evolution skateboard park in Maple, says both sports require a lot of practice and perhaps even more patience.

Mr. Hohberger's analogy rings true in another way. Both sports take place in an environment many consider beautiful.

Tucked behind The Sports Village on Rutherford Road sits a vast park filled with more than 20 ramps of varying shapes and sizes.

As far as skateboarding goes, Evolution is the mecca of York Region.

Seventeen-year-old Blair Barber and friends Greg Dunn, 16, and Christian Scenna, 22, all avid skateboarders and regulars at the Newmarket Youth Centre, joined me for this exercise in humility —

See **'OLLIE'**, page 26.

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