

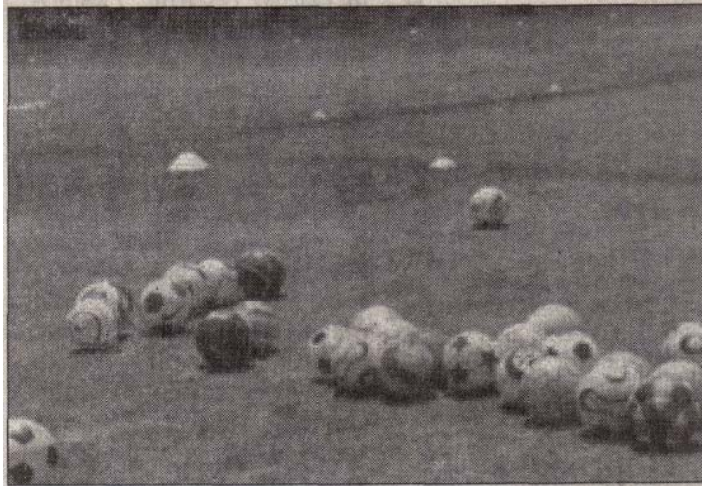
Soccer is alive and kicking at Shalom Soccer Camp

By Alanna Howard

Staff intern

Soccer or football, the game has many names. In Italian, soccer is called *calcio*, and Italian soccer is some of the best in the world. In 2006 Italy won the FIFA World Cup, which is no small feat. They beat the French in penalty kicks after a double overtime match, and since that game, Italy has kept its number one ranking. So when an Italian coach guest coaches at a soccer camp in Gary to teach children the

European style of play, people take notice. This year Shalom Soccer Academy held its first summer camp, a five-day, nonresident camp at the Colonial Baptist Church fields off of Tryon Road in Gary. The camp was held from July 9-13. The Shalom Soccer Academy is in its beginning years, and its owner and main instructor Henry Abiodun is extremely excited about the progress of the camp. Henry brought



RSC Photo by Alanna Howard

The Shalom Soccer camp had more than twice as many campers as expected, making it necessary to use all sorts of different types of soccer balls.

Coach Giorgio Covacich from Milan, Italy, to help with this unique camp. Coach Covacich brought 26 years of coaching experience as well as many years of playing experience to the camp. He currently has a UEFA "B" License and is a instructor and scout for Ascoli Soccer Academy. The camp was well

received, with approximately 60 young soccer players attending though only around thirty were anticipated. Not all camp attendees were from this area. Greg Ruff from Kansas City signed his son Mason up and turned the trip into a family vacation. He says, "we drove two days to this camp so my son, Mason, could learn from the best." As Greg describes how much he has learned while sitting on the sidelines and watching the camp progress, I can see how happy Greg is that he chose this camp for his son who just started playing soccer. "Once I read Henry's book, I knew Mason would be learning stuff he's never seen, fundamentals that are crucial when playing the game," said Mr. Ruff. One girl came a lot further than Kansas City. Abigail, whose parents are missionaries in the Philippines, is staying with her grandparents in Garner while attending the camp. Her mother



*RSC Photo by Mantis no******

A group of players at the recent Shalom Soccer Academy camp walk to the other side of the field for some shooting and passing practice.

found the camp online, and Abigail is glad she came. "I like it," she says, "this is my first time playing in the States, so it's different." Based on Abigail's testimony, the camp was a success. When asked how the camp will help talent in this area, both coaches conveyed that learning new skills, always improving your game, and building self-confidence are crucial. "America is progressing," Coach Covacich adds in reference to its path in becoming a soccer powerhouse of the world. It is on its way since signing David Beckham to the Major League Soccer club L.A. Galaxy. Real soccer fans know that Beckham isn't truly the best soccer player in the world, but he has the things both Coach Abiodun

and Coach Covacich look for in a player- attitude, character, talent, quality of play and coordination. It doesn't hurt that he's quite famous, and all this attention will hopefully have a positive effect on American soccer. Two other attendees, Eva



and Eva Patterson, also had positive things to say about the camp. Eva liked the camp because, "it makes me better. I have learned some drills that I can do at home and in my room, drills I don't need a yard for. The coaches are nice and they take stuff seriously." Patterson also had positive

things to say about the coaches. He mentioned, "It's been fun learning from the Italian coach, and I've learned a lot from him because he's the best. I especially like the scrimmages because we can show what we've learned." It's clear that both of these kids had fun and learned important lessons from this camp that will help them improve throughout their soccer years.

For more information, about the camp or other training programs, the website for the Shalom Soccer Academy is <http://www.shalomsoccer-academy.com>.

To contact a member of the Raleigh South Connection sports staff, » email jcate@raleighsouthonline