

# Make the Headlines

Amateur soccer stories are always meant to be told as if they're the World Cup final.

[Share your story today.](#)

Email: [makeheadlines1@gmail.com](mailto:makeheadlines1@gmail.com)

Phone number: (347) 338-7517



Onz Chery · Nov 13, 2019 · 5 min read

A tale of perseverance and unity: Sporting SC's promotion and State Cup

*Sporting SC founder Edgardo 'Ed' Romero: "Having guys by my side like [co-managers] Johan, Ben, and Laurence gave me the support I needed to manage a team to the top flight."*



A tale of perseverance and unity: Sporting SC's promotion and State Cup

Edgardo 'Ed' Romero was ready to call it quits in the summer of 2018. His team, Sporting S.C., finished second to last in the second division of the Cosmopolitan Soccer League for three seasons in a row.

"Aw man, I was ready to give up. We were in the bottom of the table for the last three seasons. It just meant we weren't going in the right direction and we needed to change that," Ed said.

Ed founded Sporting in 2002, inspired by a soccer team, his grandfather had in the 1930s made up of mostly family members.

Sporting started as a family-side as well. They joined the CSL in 2005 at the lowest level, the fourth division (Metro 2). It was a magical season.

"We dominated. And the way we played, aw man... we moved the ball well, played with the ball at our feet... Then after the game, we would hang out," Ed reminisced.

Sporting was promoted to the third division that season. Thinking about that first season in the CSL is one memory that always stopped Ed from wanting to give up on his dream of riding SSC to the top flight of the CSL.

"That first season is one thing that always kept me motivated," the Peruvian-American said.

So Ed went back to the off-season grind of forming a team that could make a promotion run to the top flight. Again.

But even after gathering the strength to get up and try again, next season didn't start so well. The team gave up 15 goals in their first four games while riding a 1W-2L-1T record. Ed was right back in the spot he was the previous season: Sporting was far, far away from being a team that could get promoted.

Keeper and team co-managers, Laurence Girard, Ben Espinoza, and Johan Clarke came to the rescue. Each knew high caliber players they could bring to the team.

"Having guys by my side like [co-managers] Johan, Ben, and Laurence gave me the support I needed to manage a team to the top flight," Ed stated. "When I asked they all came to me and said 'Aye, I got some players I can bring.' Stuff like that kept me going.

He later added: "We were on the same page. I would give an idea and they all would add something to make it possible."

Clarke, who's been working alongside Ed at Sporting since 2014, touched on his relationship and chemistry with him.

"If I'm still in the club, it's because for me it's not a club, it is family," he said. "After all these years that we have worked together, Ed has earned my respect and affection. More than a friend, he's a brother. I like to listen to his plans and I get surprised because we both have the same goal."

The players Laurence rallied to the club after their loss to CPR were defensive phenom, Michael Natsu, former Cornell University midfielder, Maximilian Mansfield, and ex-Albania U-21 international, Marin Frasheri-Gjoca.

Clarke brought many players to the team as well, winger Carlos Garcia (Honduras), ex Ghana international Bernard Aseidu, midfielder Abdul “Karim” Caulker (Guinea), Don “Messi” Oba, and the most notable one is former New York Red Bulls forward Abdulaye 'Abbe' Ibrahima (Togo). Abbe told Clarke the team would get promoted this season. The striker was nursing a knee injury at the start of the campaign but after the match against Central Park he was fit to play.



Abdulaye 'Abbe' Ibrahima posing for a picture last season. Sporting SC Images

Benjamin Espinoza brought many players like Juan Carlos Lainez (Honduras) and ex-University of South Florida standout, Kendan Anderson, joined the team in December and finished as the team’s second top goal scorer.

With a much-updated roster and unified board, SSC won their following match against Real Ole F.C. via a 5-2 score line. Since that match, Ed and his men showed their determination to get promoted; they didn’t lose a single game for the remainder of the regular season, amassing an 8W-0L-3D record.

The club's spree of signings proved to be massive, SSC finished in second place, which qualified them to the two promotional games. Abbe was the league's top scorer, tallying 23 goals in 15 outings including a ridiculous seven-goal display versus F.C. Spring Valley on Nov. 18, 2018. Fun Note: Abdulaye (23 goals), Kendan (15), Don “Messi” Oba (11), and Carlos Garcia (8) scored a combined 57 goals.

The league wasn’t the only competition Sporting was shining in but also the ENYSSA Jack Flamhaft Cup. It wasn’t an easy road to the final, the team had to win two matches by one goal

to reach the championship match versus A.C. Tumi (the powerhouse team of the EDSL) on June 9th of this year.

There was a bit of a dilemma schedule-wise. Four days before the Flamhaft Cup final, SSC was scheduled to play Stal Mielec in the first promotional game. Then, if they did win that encounter, the team had to play the final promotional match just three days after the Flamhaft Cup final.

The club never won a State cup before and never played a D1 promotional match neither. There was a lot of history to be made but it was quite arduous to write it looking at their schedule. Very few people expected them to be successful, Ed highlighted.

Mansfield, who went from playing that season to coaching now, explained how tough it was to take part in those dreadful matches back-to-back-to-back.

“It wasn’t like we could focus less on one [competition] than the other. We had the cup and the promotion, you could feel that everybody was tired and burned out,” the Sporting coach stated.

First, it was the opening promotional match versus Stal Mielec on June 5th.

“There was a lot of pressure [before the game],” Girard said, “considering that it was a conscious effort, there was a lot of personal sacrifice put into the season. We felt like everything was on the line.”



Sporting SC goalkeeper Laurence Girard.

The way the game went didn't help with the pressure. It was a nail-biting encounter, the score line was 2-2 in the 80th minute. Anderson was on target twice.

The Jamaican found the net again to put his side up, 3-2. It wasn't done then, Ed noted that his players put up a heroic defensive display to secure the victory. Sporting was just one game away from playing in the CSL's top-flight.

But before that, they had the Flamhaft Cup final. Carlos Garcia scored the opener for SSC from Juan Carlos Lainez's pass. A.C. Tumi tied it up.

It wasn't until the 85th minute that Sporting won the game. Anderson was yet again their hero. Sporting finally got their hands on a State Cup trophy.

The work wasn't done then yet. They still had to accomplish their main goal: the club's final promotional game was versus Polonia Gwardia NY on June 12th.



After winning the Flamhaft Cup, Sporting S.C. had to prepare for the final promotional game.

"I feel like at that point we had a lot of confidence, feel like we were definitely going to win the game," Girard said.

They did win, blanking Polonia, 3-0.

Mansfield reminisced on the players storming on the field to celebrate after the final whistle. This was it, after spending 14 years in the lower division, Sporting S.C. was finally in the top-flight of the CSL.

"It was incredible, man. Nobody expected it," Mansfield said. "The way we started the season to get not one but two big accolades at the end of the season. Aw man, it was just indescribable for our organization."

As happy as the leader of the ship, Ed, was then, he couldn't help to think about next season. His club was going to play in a much tougher division. Back to grind of putting together a competitive team to compete in the CSL D1.