

Sporting Family

By Jay Mwamba



February 29, 2012 - No one can accuse Sporting Astoria of lacking passion on the field. Ed Romero's Metro Division One outfit is as passionate as they come. It's a close-knit side, too, the brainchild of Romero who recruited family and close friends to start the club in 2002.

One of the friends he called upon was a talented 22 year-old Argentine immigrant named Patricio Ezquiél Acosta. He'd later become family after marrying Romero's cousin.

An attacking player born in Buenos Aires and raised in the town of Soldati, Acosta has been the fulcrum of Sporting, who joined the Cosmopolitan Soccer League [CSL] in 2005, from its inception.

“He has been with the team ever since,” notes Romero. “Not only does he mean a lot to me in my personal life but also for Sporting Astoria. He has been instrumental in our success.”

On the books of Argentine fourth division side Sacachispa before he moved to the United States at age 21 in 2001, Acosta has scored over 100 goals in all competition for sporting and provided plenty of assists.

“This season he is leading the team with 10 goals and six assists,” said Romero. “He helped us reach the semi-finals two times at the MLS Futbolito tournament in Flushing Park, in 2003 and 2006. He was also part of the team that gave us the Metro Two championship and promotion finishing with the best record and goal difference in the division.”

“He is the traditional [number] 10 in our team,” Romero continues. “He controls our tempo. If playing soccer is like watching an orchestra play then he is the conductor. He not only has embraced this position [but] he also leads by example.”

The Argentine has a well-earned reputation as a clutch player, having bailed out Sporting numerous times.

“In [a] State cup match against Clarkstown we were tied at one apiece,” said Romero, recalling one of Acosta's late heroics. “The game got very intense, especially in the final minutes when it [seemed] to be going to penalties.”

However, Acosta turned it on and struck twice to snatch victory.

Romero offered another example of his talisman's clutch play.

“In our last game of the season we were down 1-0 against Homenetmen, a team that played extremely defensive. A goal seemed unreachable. But in the final minute he pulled a late equalizer by connecting on a header.”

Then there’s his claim to one of the most amazing streaks in soccer at any level: Acosta has never missed a penalty in a decade with the club.

And there’s no slowing him down.

“Even at the age of 32 he plays with passion and is tireless, and that brings out the best in him and his teammates,” said Romero.

“He is a fantastic player. He is smart, has great technique, a leader on the pitch. His better days are behind him now but even at his age now he can produce. His passion is still there,” the Sporting boss goes on.

On most weekends, Acosta pulls double duty on the soccer field. On Saturdays, he turns out for LA Barra, a local Argentinian-Uruguayan club that plays at Flushing Meadow Park. He’s led them to four titles since joining them in 2006.

He has also played for Team Argentina in the Copa NYC. They advanced to the semi- finals in 2010 before bowing out 5-4 on penalties to eventual winners Poland.

Asked what he thinks of playing in the Cosmopolitan Soccer League, Acosta said:

“The competition is great. It reminds me of back home playing in Argentina with Sacachipas. It is really amazing to me now that I have played with so many different people from so many countries, from Irish to West Indians. I am really grateful for that.”

Even as the clock ticks, Romero hopes that Acosta and his fellow Sporting veterans will eventually realize their dream of taking the club higher level in the CSL.

“Patricio, like the rest of the Sporting players that have been with me a long time, deserve to win the championship and promotion to the Second Division,” he said. “Hopefully it isn’t too late although we are all getting older. But sometimes age isn’t

everything. Mix some luck with a lot of passion and you never know. Right now we have our minds set on the [D'Arpino] State Cup.”

Thanks to Acosta's exploits, Sporting are in the quarterfinals. The last time they made it that far was in 2006.

“Let's see what happens,” Romero concludes.

Sporting will surely be looking at their talisman, Patricio Acosta, for some more magic.

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