

York 9 FC names Brennan as inaugural head coach



By Jake Courtepatte

A student of the game for over thirty years, Canadian soccer legend Jim Brennan now steps into the role of teacher. The former TFC captain, and founding organizer of York 9 FC of the newly-formed Canadian Premier League, was announced as the team's first head coach at a news conference on Friday.

"I'm beyond excited to guide York 9 FC in this new sporting adventure," said Brennan in a press release. "Soccer has provided me with so many blessings both abroad and at home and I'm honoured to be given the responsibility of building the beautiful game in York Region, by playing the right way, with the ball on the ground."

"I look forward to giving supporters a driven, passionate club that proudly represent all nine of our distinct cities and towns." The past president of the Aurora FC has called York Region his home since childhood, citing his knowledge of the area and passion for community sports as reasons to undertake the task.

"We all agreed, well, maybe I should be the guy who starts off as a head coach at York 9 FC," said Brennan. "I grew up in the region. I played my local soccer in the region. I'm back home now with my family. My wife, my kids, my brothers, my friends, we all live in the region, so I think it was the right fit, to be the head coach of this team to start off."

Brennan resigned from his post as president of the Aurora club in December, with the CPL project becoming a realistic goal. York 9 FC was announced as one of the founding members of the league, set to be Canada's highest tier of professional soccer, at a press conference in May.

This time around, Brennan will be put to the test to represent all nine districts of the aptly-named York 9, including Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, King, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Vaughan, and Whitchurch-Stouffville.

"I'm still trying to find my identity as a coach, but I know a style of play I want to play: I want to play attractive, attack-minded football," he said. "It's now about getting that message out to the team and onto the field. One thing we want to do as a club is be entertaining. We want the fans to be off their seat every time we get the ball and be creative and not take that creativeness away from the players by being too structured. We want to have that creative identity where the guys have a rhythm when they're playing and can play with a smile on their face, really enjoy their football."

With stops in Norwich City, Southampton, Huddersfield Town, Nottingham Forest, and Bristol City in European football, Brennan was named the first signing of the Toronto FC of MLS when the club was announced in 2006.

Yet it was in Newmarket, and later Woodbridge and Vaughan, where Brennan first fell in love with the game.

"It was a fun journey, a lot of hard work behind the scenes to make it as a professional, but I'm enjoying this journey, and my path in life," Brennan said. "I started in York Region, fulfilled a dream of going to Europe, and I've come back to be involved with a group that's bringing professional soccer to York Region, for the next group of kids who are going to hopefully put on that York 9 jersey, and fulfill their dream."

Internationally, Brennan represented the Canadian men's national team 49 times. He was a member of Canada's Gold Cup-winning squad in 2000 and was inducted into the Canada Soccer Hall of Fame in 2015.

Now on the other side of the sidelines, Brennan hopes to bring the same progress he brought to Aurora, where he transitioned the club from Aurora Youth Soccer Club to the rebranded Aurora FC while adding two semi-pro clubs.

?I love this sport in all aspects,? Brennan said. ?I love the business side of it. I love the technical and tactical side of the game. You've always got to continue to educate yourself about this game.?
?The more you educate yourself and build up your portfolio, you kind of gravitate toward one thing that you enjoy.?
The club is set to begin play in the CPL's inaugural season in April 2019.