

York9 FC ink Adjei with CPL's first international signing



By Jake Courtepatte

A historic first for the Canadian Premier League has one striker returning to a familiar place.

York9 FC announced on Sunday the signing of Simon Adjei, the first international player to be signed by a CPL club after a few handfuls of Canadians inked contracts in the opening week of filling the rosters for the league's inaugural season.

Yet 'international' is hardly the moniker to be given to Adjei, who worked with York9 FC Manager Jim Brennan with the League 1 Ontario's Aurora FC in the 2016 season.

'We wanted a player that has an eye for goal and is clinical in the 18-yard box,' said Brennan in a team statement. 'We look for strong strikers that can link up play and push themselves to get in the box. Simon fits that mould and we're excited to have him.' Calling the 25-year old 'prolific', Adjei scored 19 goals in 19 games for Brennan's semi-pro squad in 2016, leading his team in scoring by a whopping sixteen goals.

A loan to Aurora from his home club of Husqvarna that season, Adjei then returned to his home country of Sweden in 2017, joining Assyriska IK while averaging 1.2 goals per game.

It was while in a pre-season camp with his Swedish side in 2016 that Adjei first grew fond of the GTA.

'A lot of people don't understand it,' said Adjei. 'They are texting me and calling me, but I already created my name in Sweden. People already know me.'

Yet the Swedish import said it is not just the geographical location that piques his interest, but the intrigue of the new league, where memberships are already skyrocketing for the York Region club.

'I got asked a question recently: 'Are you here for some other reason, the city, whatever?'' said Adjei.

'If I just wanted to experience a city, I'd pick a new city. I'm just here for the football because I believe in it. I'm going to work hard all the time.

'This new league is more than a really cool experience. I believe if I work hard and get my team together with me, like a family, we can go far. If we go far in the CPL I believe I can go far individually.'

Teams from across the world, such as Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Germany, Albania and Cambodia, all had interest in signing Adjei for the 2019 season.

'I believe in Jimmy and I've heard so much about this league. For me, this is serious. I believe it will be a good league. If I come in now and play well I believe I can go far.'

Brennan added Adjei has 'great touch, good pace' for a big-body presence.

'In and around the box he's lethal. He needs half-a-yard and he's putting something on target. He's good in the air. He's willing to mix it up with defenders. He can also drop into pockets and link up play. He's at a great age and we're excited to have him.'