

Dispersal draft draws final curtain on Drillers

Contributed by Norm Cowley
Tuesday, 05 December 2000

The franchise has already been terminated. Now the players have been officially separated from the family they called the Edmonton Drillers.

Sixteen of the National Professional Soccer League team's 20 players were selected in a re-entry draft Monday.

"That's amazing (so many were) picked up," said Drillers head coach Ross Ongaro, whose team had a 6-3 record despite being run by the league for two weeks after owner Wojtek Wojcicki couldn't meet the Nov. 15 payroll.

The NPSL then decided to "cease operations of the Edmonton franchise" on Nov. 30.

"It speaks really highly of what kind of team we had together here," said Ongaro. "A lot of teams wanted certain character players and we had a lot of character players.

"How many other teams would have that many players picked at one time? Baltimore is 8-1 and they're picking a player! Toronto doesn't pick anybody, but it seems to me that a couple of Canadian kids might end up there."

Martin Nash, who was tied for the Drillers' scoring lead with 30 points in nine games, was chosen first overall by the Detroit Rockers instead of the high-scoring Nikola Vignjevic, who instead went to the Harrisburgh Heat.

Team captain Kevin Holness went to the Philadelphia Kixx.

"I'm very excited to go," said Holness. "It's one thing to sit and wait. I know players there (including ex-Driller Dominic Mobilio) and I know the coach. He seems like a real nice person.

"I just want to get on the field and start playing so I can forget about everything that has gone on in the last couple of weeks."

Martin Dugas, Tiarnan King, Eric Munoz and backup goalkeeper Paul Shepherd were not selected, so they will become free agents today.

"Martin Dugas is the only name there that shocks all of us that he wasn't picked, but maybe that's because he's in his option year," Ongaro said.

"I'm just playing it by ear," said Dugas, who is coming off a severe knee injury last winter. "I'm getting used to it.

"I'm not too concerned right now. I know Kurt Bosch is in a difficult situation -- same with Damir Jesic -- because they both have to finish school.

"I know some of the guys have not been picked up by the teams they wanted to get picked up by. If I end up going to a place that is desirable for me, that's great."

The entire forward line of Nash, Carmen D'Onofrio and Paul Dailly was selected by Detroit but Dugas said only D'Onofrio was debating whether to report.

"Paul Dailly doesn't want to go anywhere, and as far as I know, Martin Nash absolutely did not want to go there. It didn't work out the same way that people thought. Never does, though."

DRILL BITS

Former Drillers taken in the NPSL re-entry draft on Monday:

Martin Nash, Paul Dailly and Carmen D'Onofrio were taken by the Detroit Rockers; midfielders Nikola Vignjevic and Kurt Bosch by the Harrisburg Heat; forward Rick Titus and midfielder Alfredo Valente by the Buffalo Blizzard; goalkeeper Jim Larkin and midfielder Damir Jesic by the Wichita Wings; defenders Chris Handsor and LeBaron Hollimon by the Kansas City Attack, midfielder Kevin Holness and defender Geordie Lyall by the Philadelphia Kixx; defender Todd Rattee by the Cleveland Crunch; midfielder Siphon Sibiyi by the Milwaukee Wave and defender Jeff Clarke by the Baltimore Blast.

- Players not selected Midfielders Martin Dugas, Tiarnan King and Eric Munoz, plus goalkeeper Paul Shepherd.

They become free agents today.