



Lafreniere U-17 Gamblers Take Fourth State Crown

Three time Premier State Soccer Champion U-17 Lafreniere Gamblers left no doubt who was “King of the Pitch” winning both the semi-finals and finals of the Louisiana Premier State Cup in Lafayette on May 30 and 31, 2009 and winning their fourth State title.

The Lafreniere Gamblers started off championship weekend by beating an athletic Shreveport team with goals from Justin Portillo, Patrick Mullins, Graham McQueen, and Brian Flint. The defense, led by Alex Brignac, Sean Kelly, Jordan Scott, and Jordan Schwartz, made it an easy day for keeper Joe Hart, as the Gamblers controlled play. The Shreveport team did block numerous shots on goal during the first half of the game resulting in a scoreless first half. However, during the break Coach Juan Planells challenged the Gamblers to score three goals during the first ten minutes of the second half and the Gamblers met his challenge and then some. Sam Weinberg, Enrique Escobar, Max Vizelberg, and Bryce Luquet controlled play in the middle of the field and Patrick Warwick’s play up top frustrated the Shreveport team.

On Sunday, the Gamblers faced a feisty Mandeville Laker team in the Finals. The defending State Champion Lafreniere Gambler’s ranks were enhanced with this year’s addition of St. Paul’s High School “Wolves” Wesley Lee and Taylor Price, along with Jesuit players Brandon Cohen and Patrick Mullins. The Lafreniere Gamblers dominated play. Lafreniere first found the back of the net 20 minutes into the game when Patrick Mullins flicked the ball on toward the goal and Brian Flint headed the ball in.

Unfortunately, the goal was called back on the questionable off sides call. Undeterred the Gamblers scored two minutes later off a corner kick. Justin Portillo served a high ball across the penalty box to Brian Flint who volleyed it to the far post where Mandeville resident Taylor Price headed it home for the first official goal. Five minutes later Patrick Mullins, the Louisiana Gatorade Player of the Year, scored on a direct kick, bent around the wall, to make the score 2-0 going into half time.

The Gamblers extended their lead ten minutes into the second half with another goal by Patrick Mullins. Shortly thereafter, Graham McQueen made a nice cross to Justin Portillo who buried the ball in the lower right corner of the net for the fourth goal. Keeper Joe Hart recorded his fourth shutout in five State Cup games to earn the “Outback Steakhouse Man of the Match.” All told, the Gamblers scored 16 goals and gave up one goal during their State Cup run. Goals were scored by seven different players, assisted by several more, making it a total team effort. The Gamblers next travel to Dallas to represent Louisiana in the USYSA (United States Youth Soccer Assoc.) Region III Championships on June 18-24th. The Vegas odds makers’ line is don’t bet against the Gamblers!