



## **The Italian Team at Copa NYC. A Fast Defeat, but a Great Debut**

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This year the Italian team participated for the first time to Copa NYC, a soccer tournament organized with the support of the city government that involves many different ethnic groups living in NYC. Although having been eliminated on the first day, the Italian players showed to be talented and to have a great team spirit

Soccer is a global sport: it's simple and loved by children and adults from all over the world. We all followed the last World Cup in South Africa, and among us many celebrated but also many cried, there were champs and losers.

While for the rest of the world the soccer summer was over on July 11, for us in New York it had just started with the COPA NYC, whose motto was not by case "The World Cup Is Not Over".

Soccer is a sport that is becoming increasingly popular in the U.S. also thanks to the arrival of some European stars like David Beckham and more recently Thierry Henry. American folks now go to the stadium more often and throughout the national territory you can find many more soccer fields than



before. On weekends, indeed, neighborhood public parks are crowded with people that not only play basket but also soccer.

Since 2009 Copa NYC gives the opportunity to foreign communities living within the urban borders to build their own soccer team and to challenge other teams of different ethnicities, just as in the World Cup. This year also an Italian team participated to the tournament.

COPA NYC took place at Pier 40, by the river, on the South-West side of Manhattan. It was a great location for the event for the many and beautiful soccer fields built there and the many stands available for the public attending. Supporters of every nationality being represented sang songs and encouraged the team players.

We attended the first three matches of the Italian team on June 24, and a soft breeze coming from the river relieved us from the high humidity of that hot summer day. There were not the best weather conditions for a soccer match...

There was a great atmosphere all around us. Players, supporters, men and women, children and adults... it was a feast of joyous songs, horns, and hymns... You could see how the teams were very involved in the tournament, the competition was very high and the players really seemed intentioned to use all their talent to defeat the opponents.

Argentinian and the Mexican fans were with no doubt the most numerous and noisy, they sang and shouted loud while blowing the trumpets... Their hundreds of flags of different sizes gave the field a colourful background

The Italians gathered in a small part of the stadium, they were less than the others but still made their voice heard. They were less organized maybe because this was the first time for them at the Copa NYC and they hadn't realized that the tournament is followed by the supporters of the other teams with strong passion and attention.

The participating teams were made of non professional players and this gave everybody the opportunity to play more or less at the same level.

Some of the teams found it very hard to play three matches a day, especially those with the older players who felt more than the other the fatigue of several hours of running in the hot weather. The Italian team was among them and in fact it did not even pass the first selection.

And it was a pity, because there were many expectations on it due to the long athletic training the players went through and to the visible talent of some of the players.

The beginning of the Italian adventure was very encouraging because of the victory against the Brazilian team, one of the most attended matches because of the historical rivalry between the two teams in the real World Cup. The exceptionally skilled Italian and Brazilian players played a great match with important turning points like the Italian goal and the red card received by an Italian defensor. This made the final victory a great success because of the spirit of sacrifice the Italian players had in the second half keeping the advantage till the end.

The other two matches were not as exciting because the players tired. Italy played against Greece immediately after the first match and during the second half the Italian players were not able to maintain the same level of the previous game. The final score was 2-0, so a great victory for the Greece team. Also the last match against the England team resulted in a defeat, and to the final elimination of the Italian team.

After all it wasn't so much of a negative start for the Italian team that participated to the tournament for the first time this year: they showed to be talented players with a great team spirit.

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