



Duka Brothers and Icon FC Make their Mark on Open Cup

By Zach Smith

Published: May 20, 2013

A year ago, Eric Wynalda, a former U.S. Men's National Team player, and Cal FC of the United States Adult Soccer Association made a run to the fourth round of the Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup.

Now, another team from the USASA, led by another former U.S. international player, hopes to make the same kind of deep run.

New Jersey-based Icon FC defeated the Brooklyn Italians 4-1 for the club's first win in the U.S. Open Cup.

Danny Szetela, a former midfielder from the U.S. Youth program and veteran of the 2008 Olympic team, is playing with Icon FC after having three knee surgeries in the past two years.

"The coach is a family friend since I was little," Szetela said. "After I had my surgeries I had to start training, so I started training with them."

One thing led to another, and now he's a midfielder who's played more than 10 games with the team.

Forward Argjent Duka said Szetela is the heart of the team, and the experience and effort he puts forth in practice and in games is rubbing off on the team in positive ways.

"You can tell the experience (he's had) when he has the ball," Duka said. "I don't know if we'd be making this run without him."

Szetela was a five-semester resident of U.S. Soccer's U-17 Residency Program from 2004 until spring 2006, and scored a pair of goals against Poland at the FIFA U-20 World Cup in 2007.

He was called up to the U.S. U-23 MNT for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, China, making two appearances.

On a team filled with amateur players, Szetela said there are a lot of professional-level players that have boatloads of experience, and he's doing his best to harness the wealth of experience on the team to propel it forward.

"I want them to play with heart," he said. "The guys get a little nervous playing in these Open Cup games, and I'm trying to make the guys relaxed as much as I can. We're on a good run, and I hope it keeps going."

Argjent Duka, the older brother of Chicago Fire midfielder Dilly Duka, tallied a hat trick in Icon FC's 4-1 win Tuesday night.

Duka, who's been at Icon FC for a few years now, said he's never been on an Icon FC team as good as this year.

"I brought some friends along, and we've been playing great," he said. "We're not the most athletic team, but we're a good team. We have a team with a good chemistry and we play well together. I just happened to be in the right place at the right time."

It's possible for the club to advance past USL PRO's Richmond Kickers, but Duka said it will be difficult and will require some luck and not making any mistakes.

Still, he has been getting extra motivation from his younger brother, Dilly, as Icon FC goes deeper and deeper into the tournament.

Dilly tweeted "Watching my bro kill it for Icon FC #USOpenCup #firstround 3 goals for AJ Dukes" late during the match Tuesday night.

The two are close, talk all the time, and train together whenever they have the chance.

Dilly said that growing up in a house with two other brothers, sports, and especially soccer, were ways for the three of them to bond.

"We have a pretty tight knit family," Dilly said. "My brother follows my soccer, as I follow his. Making it to this level, they're very happy for me. Now with his success and this team from our hometown's success, we're happy and hoping that they can make it a little further."

For most of his youth career, Argjent played in the midfield, but switched to an attacking forward position with Icon FC.

Argjent has a high soccer IQ that Dilly said allows him to play many different positions well and opens the door for other types of teams.

In the end, Dilly is hoping that his brother, friends and Icon FC make it deep into the tournament, but at the same time he knows how the schedule could play out.

"If they could go a little further, I'll definitely be supporting them," Dilly said. "But if they somehow play the Chicago Fire, I would definitely cut it out then. That team is a team that has been playing together for several years. Maybe they need a little luck, but they can have a run like Cal FC."