

Robert's Rant: Canada being knocked out of the World Cup is no failure, it is only the beginning

By Robert Belardi

Opinion

It has been a frustrating week for us Canadian soccer fans.

Canada was knocked out of the World Cup having suffered a 4-1 defeat against Croatia on Sunday and, as we might all be feeling the weight of disappointment and anger at the defeat, you might be thinking this World Cup has been a failure.

But I'll tell you what: it is far from it for many reasons.

For starters, this World Cup appearance was an announcement to other federations around the globe that Canada is on the map. The 36-year wait ended and came to a close four years early, in fact. Many Canadians might have thought that Canada would have had to wait until 2026 to make their second appearance in the FIFA World Cup, but thankfully that was not the case.

These players had the chance to gain some World Cup experience, global exposure and the chance to be part of history. When Alphonso Davies headered home the opening goal against Croatia he ultimately made Canadian history. He became the first Canadian to ever score a World Cup goal and that is an incredible accomplishment within itself. Canada also took #2 ranked Belgium to the brink in their opening match and were hard done by not to have received at least a point.

Players such as former Aurora resident Alistair Johnston is on the verge of signing for Scottish giant's Celtic FC. Tajon Buchanan, following his performances, is being scouted by other European Clubs. The biggest thing out of all this is players on this men's national team are making headlines with big clubs around the globe and the more they are scouted and signed by them, the more there is hope for our youth to do one day do the same.

Canada can also make history again as they took on Morocco earlier this week, seeking out their very first World Cup win.

In our country's second ever appearance in the world's most famous tournament, I'm not sure where this is even close to being a failure. It is an incredible success story that sets the tone for when the World Cup comes to Canada for the first time ever in four years. And sets the tone for the future of the sport in this country for years to come.

Now those are accomplishments on the pitch, but what about accomplishments off of the pitch? What else can a World Cup do?

There are many things that an appearance in the World Cup can accomplish and one of them in my opinion is the brand. Canada Soccer. That is what we can change next.

Canada Soccer's current logo, is a variation of the original logo designed in 1974. And it was re-designed in 1997. The maple leaf sits atop of the Canada Soccer text and a half a soccer ball is placed underneath.

This is the time, in my eyes, for Canada Soccer to do more. If you want your name beside everyone else, it's time to bring in something appealing and something that will define Canada's identity.

When you think of the French, you think of the rooster. When you think of England, you think of three lions. When you think of the Welsh, you think of a dragon. Those are identities of those nations. So, I ask, what can Canada do to make sure that we have an appealing logo? Maybe the Canada Goose? A beaver? A polar bear? Just throwing out ideas here.

Next is the name. Canada Soccer seems bland. What about Canada Soccer Federation, or in French beside that? Something to further dig up the roots of the country's history to showcase to the world. Majority of nations have "federation" in their name. It sounds more professional on all accounts.

Doing something like this will also further motivate Nike "who sponsor this country's kit" to create a kit that is more appealing. The nation's kit might seem rather bland or just not taken care of properly. It happens with a lot of nations who don't make the World Cup very often. Just take a look at Croatia's kit from when they made their first World Cup appearance in France in 1998. You'll see what I'm talking about.

So, I say to those, one last time, if you believe this World Cup is a failure, it is far from it. Canada Soccer has a lot of work to do. They've put the team on the pitch and that is an amazing start.

But now there is more to do. Let's enhance the Canadian brand and let's solidify an identity on who this nation wants to be.