

# Waldorf Takes Pilot Cup by Storm

*Costa Mesa, CA* – The Waldorf School of Orange County participated in the 2015 Pilot Cup Soccer Tournament last week at the Jack Hammett Sports Complex. Both the men's and women's teams were in action. The 16<sup>th</sup> annual event pits teams from Newport Beach and Costa Mesa and is known as one of the most prestigious events in the country.

Waldorf's women's fifth and sixth grade team entered group play undefeated on the young season. Coach Terence Tubbs had worked the girls hard in training. At the outset of their first match against Newport Elementary it looked like they may have been overworked, as they started sluggishly. After falling behind 3 nil early, the girls found their groove. Jillian Tubbs pounced on a loose ball in the box and hammered home to cut into the lead. But time ran out and the girls conceded a hard fought game to the eventual tournament champions.

Game two of pool play was much different. The girls came out firing on all cylinders. Led by goalkeeper Kyra Slutzky and fronted by outstanding defensive efforts from Matilda Dumaine, Camilla Gavrilov, Sage Trudeau, and Lauren O'Neill the girls held the vaunted attack of Davis Elementary to a lone goal. The Lady Wildcats were dominant in midfield. Sophia Baird directed the attack and her midfield compatriots Isabel Dumaine, Veronika Agle, and Fallon Rowerdink maintained a decided possession edge over Davis. Up front the squad was led by Kimberly Klocke who notched a brace. The rest of the attacking group of Emma Tomblin-Marca, Amelie Ando, and Emelia Stahl pressured the Davis back line incessantly. Tubbs continued her impressive run with two goals and Baird notched her first of the tournament with a buzzing strike from distance. The win was especially satisfying for young Tubbs as she had foregone the opportunity to represent her country in this summer's Women's World Cup in Canada in order for one more shot at glory with her schoolmates. "It was totally worth it. I'll miss these guys, and playing for my dad and school. But I'll have plenty of other chances to play for the boring old U.S of A." Waldorf's victory was so dominant that their next opponent, Rea Elementary, never got off the bus, electing to forfeit rather than take the field against the Lady Wildcats. With success comes a heightened expectation for next year. At press time it was unclear if Coach Tubbs would be back as his contract has expired and talk is that he is contemplating retirement. Many of the girls are already being coveted by club and AYSO teams for the fall season.

The Waldorf men's team had the honor of playing in the tournament opening match against St John's. After the pomp and circumstance of the opening ceremony, the Wildcats put on a dominant performance. The boys kept St John bottled up in their own end for the majority of the game. Deven LaLonde opened the scoring with a fine display of dribbling after running onto a sweet pass from Chenan Wondercheck. Wondercheck later got himself on the score sheet and Tommy Brown netted a brace. Leo DeMichele finished off the scoring with a chip shot that brought up memories of Andrea Pirlo's Panenka in 2012's European Championships. The tone was set early in this one as Sebastian "SeaBass" Kahn dominated the defensive zone. One St John's player was heard whispering on the sidelines about fearing the wrath of Khan.

Entering Waldorf's second and final game of pool play, Coaches Fernando Rubalcava, Rob Penney, and Seth Dardis still seemed concerned about their defense. Granted Waldorf's back line players lacked the experience of their outstanding midfield duo of LaLonde and Brown. However, the last minute decision to move Elijah Pangrazio from midfield to the number 2 center back position clearly stabilized the unit and proved to be one of the many strokes of genius by Dardis. The ultra steady, stay at home play of Jethro Oxford Pope allowed Pangrazio to roam the field and chip in offensively when needed. The defensive wings were manned admirably by the heady Jack Penney, who played like the coach's son he is, Max and Morris "Don't Call Us Brothers" Wang, and Mathias Valenzuela-Mier, who all chipped in with clutch stops. Fronting the impenetrable Bruno Linhares in goal, Waldorf's stingy defense held the Lincoln Lions to a single goal in their 3-1 triumph. Luke Slutzky gave the opposition fits with his speed causing all sorts of problems for Lincoln's back line, depositing a goal and drawing the defense's attention for Brown to fire home. LaLonde had opened the scoring with a picturesque volley off of an exquisite cross from Brown.

The victory propelled Waldorf into the quarterfinals on Saturday May 30 against a strong Adams squad. Uncharacteristically Waldorf started slow. Perhaps it was the added pressure of an elimination game, but Waldorf found themselves down 2-0 late into the second half. But there was no quit in these boys. Early in the fourth period DeMichele sent Wondercheck ahead with a sublime through ball. Wondercheck ate up turf with those gazelle like strides of his and fired into the back of the net to get Waldorf on the board. Waldorf fan Steve Oxford Pope was heard murmuring, "If only Peter Crouch could do that!" Wondercheck continued his high work rate and was rewarded late in stoppage time as he was taken down inside the box and the referee pointed to the penalty spot. The crowd held its collective breath as it was so quiet you could hear a cello being tuned. Coach Penney opted for his star playmaker Brown to take the spot kick. But being the leader he is, Brown instead deferred to Wondercheck, rewarding the big man for all his hard work. Wondercheck calmly struck to tie the score. There it ended and it was on to penalty kicks to determine a winner.

With Linhares in goal the Wildcats were at a distinct advantage. Yet the Adams keeper was formidable as well and nothing was certain. Adams shot first and went high. LaLonde coolly hit home. After an Adams score, Brown also struck gold. On the third Adams try the shot was narrowly missed by a diving Linhares but struck the post, caromed across the goal line before tapping the other post and rolling off. No goal! Wondercheck banged home for Waldorf and Linhares saved to clinch the victory and a spot in the semi-finals.

Neighborhood rival Victoria Elementary awaited the Wildcats in the semi finals. Again, the team started slowly, falling behind two nil. This time the tide turned due to outstanding midfield work from the Wildcats. Waldorf came at Victoria in waves. The midfield rotation of Collin Carr, Antonio Dardis, Cole Rubalcava, Ethan Matthey and Travis Gilmer made plays all over the field allowing for a strong possession advantage for Waldorf. Their work paid off as striker extraordinaire Wondercheck scored once and the ever dangerous Brown banked the equalizer. Again, to the chagrin of the over stressed Waldorf nation, the game moved to PKs.

The ever cool LaLonde matched Victoria's opening salvo. Victoria scored again and a hiccup from Brown sent the ball skying over the net. But Linhares heroically saved and Wondercheck and Pangrazio scored. Linhares saved again before Oxford Pope stood over the ball, took a deep breath and gave the Wildcat fans relief with the strike that will go down in Waldorf lore. For the first time in their history Waldorf was in the finals.

Sunday's final was a rematch with St John, who had advanced out of pool play as a wildcard. Something was clearly amiss in the late day final. Maybe the troops were sluggish from the midday Habit meal. Possibly they needed the jolt from the birthday cupcakes at half rather than post game. The lads played with passion, sometimes too much, as yellow was shown early to a frustrated Brown and late to Kahn, for a crushing tackle. St John had revenge in their blood and peppered Linhares's goal relentlessly. Two got by. Waldorf pressed on. Twice Brown was denied on howitzer free kicks. The St John defense parried away another free kick that was destined for the head of LaLonde. Coach Rubalcava exhorted the troops to press the issue offensively. Max Wang began pushing farther up the pitch, gambling to break the ice. But things turned bleak when midfield standout Massai Utai had to be helped to the locker room with a knock and the boys ran out of time. The trophy went to a deserving St John squad.

History was made in reaching the final. Coach Dardis vowed to come back stronger next year and has some quality waiting in the fourth grade. They'll have to get it done without stalwarts Brown and LaLonde who both announced at the post game press conference their retirement from school team duties to focus on their respective club teams. And rumors of having Pangrazio fail sixth grade for another shot at the title seem unfounded. But this season is one for the memory books and is best summed up by the showing of thousands of fans awaiting the team plane at John Wayne airport and serenading the group with one last chant of "Bruno! Bruno! Bruno!"