

Reda, the hometown hero

Toronto Lynx puts faith in young Canadian international

BY MICHAEL ZWELLING



Every kid has, at one time or another, dreams of playing for his hometown team.

Born in North York and raised in Woolbridge, Ontario, Marco Reda is now in his third season as a member of the Toronto Lynx.

The little boy has grown up and is making the most of his opportunity, winning the Lynx Best Defensive Player award in 1999 and earning the captain's armband.

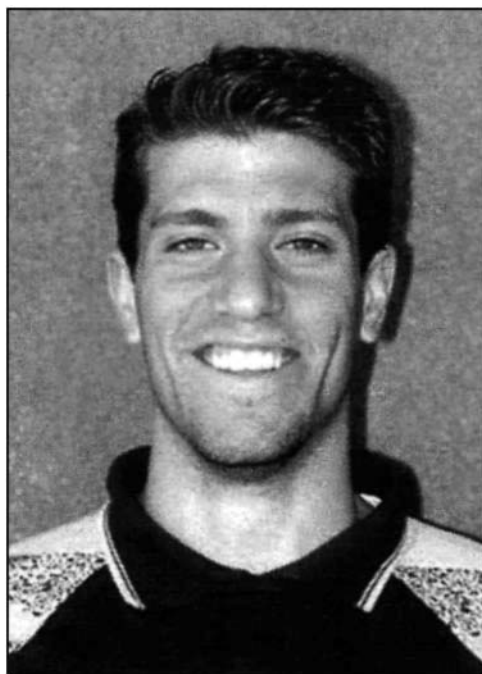
Reda's play has also caught the attention of Canadian national team coaches. He's been a member of the under-20 and under-23 national teams.

In 1999, Reda played for Canada at the Pan-American Games. He made the Canadian under-23 team that went to Hershey, Pa., for Olympic qualifying, but he didn't play. Although he hopes to move on to the Canadian senior national team, Reda has other things to think about at the moment.

"I just want to concentrate on the Lynx right now—we're looking for a playoff spot this year," Reda said. "Anything less would be a disappointment, both personally and as a team."

So far, the Lynx is in good shape. Fully healed after an injury to a right quadriceps muscle, Reda played 90 minutes in the Lynx's 2-1 win over Rochester May 6. That followed a 1-1 tie with Pittsburgh in Toronto's season opener.

CONFIDENCE ON BALL. Reda combines his size (6-foot-1, 190 pounds) with an understanding of the game and ability to make wise decisions. His versatility has also served him well.



COURTESY OF TORONTO LYNX

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Reda's experience as a midfielder has helped him in the back, where he is confident on the ball.

"He may not be the quickest player, but he reads the game well," says Peter Pinizzotto, the Lynx head coach. "He has good vision with the long passes out of the back, and he's accurate."

His play in central defense had a lot to do with it, but it was also the intangibles he offers that earned the 22-year-old the right to wear the captain's arm band this season.

"We choose a captain by looking at his attitude, training regimen and what kind of leader he is, even at a young age," said Pinizzotto.

Reda attended Winthrop University on a soccer scholarship after being noticed at Holy Cross Catholic High School, where he was a part of five York Region Soccer Championships and made two final four appearances.

He still considers his education important. Reda currently has a "solid B, about 3.5" GPA at York University with one year remaining to get his physical education degree.

OPTIONS OPEN. Reda's plans for this year are clear, but beyond that, there are options he may have to consider.

According to Pinizzotto, Reda has already been looked at by an Austrian team. But right now, he's pleased to have the "super team-man" as a part of the Lynx plans for 2000.

"I don't have an agent, but there are people out there looking," Reda said. "I'm going to finish this season with the Lynx, and then I'll have to make a decision as to whether or not to go abroad."

Lynx off to strong start

The Toronto Lynx is off to a 1-0-1 start, having upset Rochester, 2-1, and tied Pittsburgh, 1-1, both on the road.

The Lynx has not made the playoffs in its first two years, but it did show improvement last season, going 11-8 to end the season.

Coach Peter Pinizzotto has made few changes. Only three players who started against Roch-

ester were not with Toronto last season: Argentine defender Mauricio Vincello, Canadian midfielder Lyndon Hooper and Colombian striker Juan Pablo Arango.

Toronto is a predominantly Canadian team. Six of the 11 starters are Canadian-born, and Hooper came to the Toronto area as a child from Guyana.

Brazilian Francisco Dos Santos (29 points) and Yugoslav Nikola Vignjevic (19) were the Lynx's top scorers last season.