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Soccer Complex off to a Spectacular Start

Perris officials broke ground on a \$2.6-million state-of-the-art soccer complex Oct. 18 and then hosted a soccer-skills camp that drew more than 150 beginning, intermediate and advanced players.

Players, parents, coaches and elected officials said they can't wait for the new field—which includes artificial turf and much-needed restrooms—to open, which should take place in mid-2015. The first field is just the beginning of what is expected to grow into a massive complex of six fields with lighting, snack bar services and parking. Once completed, the soccer complex will add greatly to Perris' recreational facilities and keep local kids from having to travel outside the City to play.

"This soccer complex will be a major enrichment to the culture of our community," said Perris City Councilman Al Landers, who hosted the event. "You can't help but smile. A lot of hard work has gone into make this complex happen. It's good to realize the fruition of all that work."



City elected officials and administrators at the ground-breaking for a new \$2.6 million soccer complex: City Manager Richard Belmudez, Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers, City Councilman Mark Yarbrough, City Councilman Al Landers, City Councilman Julio Rodriguez, Mayor Daryl Busch, Assistant City Manager Ron Carr and Deputy City Manager Darren Madkin.

Perris administrators and elected representatives acquired the 13-acre site on Murrieta Road a decade ago as part of an agreement with a residential developer. The site was renamed Patriot Park and for years as served as the home of the Perris Patriots football league. The soccer components will be added next to the football field. Construction on Phase I is expected to begin within 30 days.

Landers, Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers, City Council members Julio Rodriguez and Mark Yarbrough were joined in the ground-breaking by City Manager Richard Belmudez, Assistant City Manager Ron Carr and Deputy City Manager Darren Madkin.

"This is a great day for Perris," Busch told the crowd. "This will become an elite soccer complex. Our City is committed to growing and expanding its recreational activities for its youth. Fields like this don't come cheap but we think the cost is worth the result. Our youth deserve the best fields we can provide."

Busch said that in addition to the new soccer complex, the City has finished or has plans to complete improvements at Skydive Park, Morgan Park and Bob Long Park.



The Chivas USA mascot proved a popular attraction, here posing with members of a Perris youth soccer team.

Professional soccer player Thomas McNamera, a midfielder for the Chivas USA soccer team, was on hand to provide pointers and sign autographs. The Chivas fighter mascot put in an appearance as well as a team cheerleader. The day's events also featured giveaways of bicycles and soccer gear.

Mayor Pro-Tem Rogers told the enthusiastic crowd that "soon, you will have new fields to play on."

"This is a council that hears this community, listens to this community and is dedicated to serve this community," Rogers said. "It is a great day for the youth of Perris."



Running was included in the skills camp, as these young players are put through their paces.

Councilman Rodriguez said Perris is a hotbed for soccer enthusiasts. The Oct. 18 ground-breaking was also part of the City's ongoing Live Well Perris healthy-eating active-living campaign, which added an extra bonus to the day's festivities.

"It's great to be able to provide a world-class facility for our City," Rodriguez said. "It reinforces the fact that this City prioritizes its youth and invests in its youth."

Councilman Yarbrough said he played soccer on the 1977 Perris High School Panthers squad.

"Sports are so important to our kids," he said. "They instill teamwork, camaraderie, leadership and physical fitness. Let's get our kids off the coach and onto a playing field. Ground-breakings like today remind us that as a City, we continue to move in the right direction."



Agility drills helped players develop coordination.

The skills camps concentrated on teaching basic like dribbling, passing and shooting.

Bryan Calderon, 12, said he learned how to pass, communicate with hand signals and completed agility drills. He liked the scrimmage as well.

"The scrimmage was fun," Ryan said. "I had a good time."

So did Luis Gallardo, 12. He said he learned that passing is a more valuable skill than shooting.

"Anyone can shoot," he said. "Passing is an art."



Winners of raffle prizes pose with City staffers during the soccer-skills camp.

Perris resident Fernando Huerta has four children—ages 8 to 13—who play soccer. He praised Perris officials for installing an artificial surface at the new complex, pointing out that such turf is smoother than natural grass and facilitates better play.

"I feel very good about this new field," he said. "We've got a lot of soccer players in this town. It will be used."

Felipe Martinez, who coaches a 9-year-old and younger team in Perris, agreed the new field is needed and represents a major improvement to soccer lovers in the City.

"More kids will get a chance to play," Martinez said. "We're a growing City and our kids need more places to play."

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