



Contact: Joe Vargo, Perris Public Information Officer
Phone: 951-956-2120
jvargo@cityofperris.org

Perris Soccer Festival a Resounding Success



Dignitaries pose with the local squad

The Perris High School football stadium shook, rattled and rolled as more than 3,000 people came to an international soccer match that pitted a group of local players against a squad of retired professionals from Mexico.

The exhibition was part of a fund-raiser for the Perris Valley Inter-Soccer League, which develops young soccer players and takes part in regional competitions.

League organizers hope to one day travel to Mexico as part of their efforts to train local top-of-the-line soccer players.

"It's a dream come true for our community," said Julio Reyes, commissioner of the Perris Inter-Soccer League. "We outdid ourselves. I am very excited for our community. It was a great event. I want to thank the City of Perris which worked with us to make it possible."

The main event took place after dark, but there were plenty of other attractions to excite the crowd. Youth soccer teams from Perris, Moreno Valley, Hemet, San Jacinto and Corona made the trip to the City and laced up their shoes to show their prowess on the field.

Hector Munoz brought a team of 5-to-7 year old Perris youngsters to take part in the competition. He praised Perris officials for working to bring the international game to the City.

"It's good for the kids to feel pride in their Latino heritage," Munoz said. "It's a big thrill. We really appreciate it." Another coach, Miguel Diaz, came to the City with a team of girls from San Jacinto. He said he used the promise of meeting the retired Mexican professionals as a motivation for his team.

"I tell them that someday they will make it," he said. "I wanted to be a pro. I didn't make it. But I am still very glad to be here. I am definitely going to have my pictures taken with the pros, shake their hands and get autographs."

Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers and City Council members Al Landers and Joanne Evans represented Perris. Rogers took part in a pre-game ceremonial kick with Carolina Zaragoza Flores, the Mexican consul based in San Bernardino. Other pre-game ceremonies included the playing of the U.S. and Mexican national anthems.

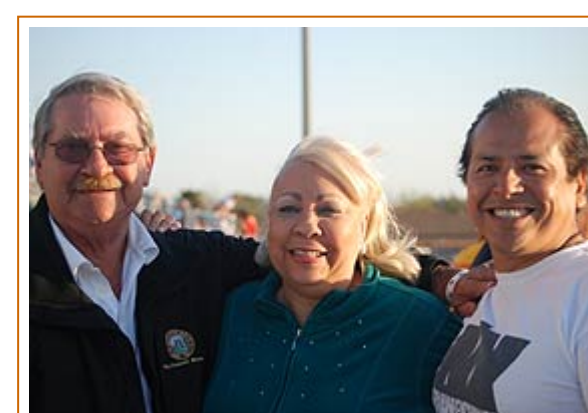
"This game is taking place in the magnificent City of Perris and we are extremely excited," Rogers said. "There is a huge turnout. It's great for the City."

Landers noted that many families took seats in the stands, saying that Perris is becoming more and more well-known for its family-type events.

"We have many diverse cultures in Perris and we are always glad and proud to celebrate them," he said. "Other cities talk about their commitment to diversity; we show ours."

Evans said soccer is played around the world and that she was glad Perris took the opportunity to take center stage for an international event.

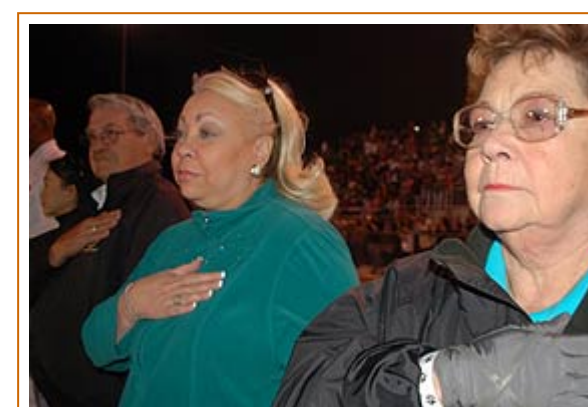
"I am so proud of our City," she said.



Perris City Councilman Al Landers, Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers with Julio Reyes, commissioner of the Perris Inter-Soccer League.



Perris players Beto Larios, Dorian Farias and Mauro Veyna prior to the match.



Perris City Councilwoman Joanne Evans (closest to camera) stands at attention during the U.S. National Anthem. Standing next to her are Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers and Councilman Al Landers.



Players from Perris and Mexico vie to control the action during the closely contested game. Mexico won 3 to 2 in overtime.

Perris Inter-City players Beto Larios, Mauro Veyna and Dorian Flores said before the game they were nervous but thrilled to take part against competitors they grew up watching on television.

"Hopefully, they won't embarrass us," said Veyna, 21, who lives in Perris. "It's a dream for us. We're just lucky enough to be able to play against them."

Larios, 24, said the Perris squad had youth on its side. Most local players were in the 20s; the Mexican retired pros were twice as old.

"It's youth versus experience," he said. "Hopefully we should do okay."

Farias, 22, said he hoped the old-timers "don't make us look bad."

"We looked up to them as kids," he said. "They were very, very good."

In the end, experience overcame youth. The retired pros took the youngsters 3 to 2 in overtime.

Rogers said she was disappointed the Perris squad lost. But there were benefits nonetheless.

"The City of Perris is the big winner," she said.