



Sports, seafood industry are served

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Alaska can now lay claim to hosting the farthest north global soccer competition.

The first Prince William Sound International Salmon Soccer Invitational Tournament fielded a mix of teams sponsored by four major seafood processors last Thursday in Cordova. The event was the community's way of recognizing the nearly 800 seafood processing workers that come to Cordova each summer from all over the world.

This event was the brainchild of Martin Moe, executive director of the Cordova Chamber of Commerce to serve several purposes. Moe wanted the community to recognize and appreciate the tireless efforts our seasonal workers give while processing the bounty of the salmon harvest in the Sound and Copper River Delta.

"Without their hard work we would not be able to reap the benefits of our excellent fishing fleet," Moe said. "This will also allow the community upon whose livelihood the fisheries are based to express their appreciation to the processors and their workers. And last it will provide the people of Cordova and the group of workers with an opportunity to witness an international brand of soccer. These seasonal employees come from a variety of American, Mexican, South American, and European countries. The level of skill exhibited by athletes from each processor was extraordinary."

Four Cordova processors formed a 15-member team which then competed in a six-match, round-robin of pool play to determine seeding for the final two matches. The teams from Ocean Beauty Seafoods and Copper River Seafoods emerged as the top contenders for the championship match, while the teams from Trident South and Trident North were to play for third place.

After Trident South prevailed over Trident North in sudden death overtime for third place, a spirited championship match was played between Ocean Beauty and Copper River.

"In the end, Ocean Beauty emerged the victor, despite an exciting comeback effort by the Copper River team. To the victor went the spoils, bragging rights for the year and possession of the Slammin Salmon Soccer Cup trophy," Moe said. "You know, these workers are part of our community for up to six months each year. This was such a great way to bring people together so that each one recognizes they are all part of our community."

The Slammin' Salmon Soccer cup was designed and provided by the Cordova Chamber of Commerce. "This is a perpetual trophy, to be displayed by the winning processor for the year until it goes up for grabs the next year. Each year the winner's name will be engraved on an accompanying plaque to be displayed with the trophy," Moe said.

Torie Baker, a Sea Grant marine advisor in Cordova, said the teams were from the Ukraine, Eastern Europe, the Czech Republic, Central America, Mexico, the Caribbean and Turkey.

“Even the ref who did all 10 games is a professional soccer judge in his other life in the Ukraine,” Baker said.

“We felt like we’d been dropped into the middle of some London soccer match with the fans singing and waving banners and shaking noise makers — it was pretty amazing. Elders were brought over from the senior center and given prime seats on the field, and school classes were let out so kids could watch the international competition. Cordova has already issued an invitation to more teams next summer.

“We are challenging Peter Pan in Valdez and Great Pacific in Whittier to bring their best teams over on the fast ferry,” Baker said.

“Heck, let’s extend the invitation to teams from Homer, Seward and Kodiak too!” said Moe.

All winning teams will live forever on a perpetual trophy from the Chamber of Commerce that Moe has dubbed the Slammin’ Salmon Soccer Cup. The four-foot trophy is topped with a scrimshaw pictogram of a king salmon flipping a soccer ball through the waves.

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