

Here come the Girls! U17s make history to qualify for CONCACAF finals

A Bahamian soccer squad had achieved a significant milestone! For the first time in the history of sports in the country, a Bahamian soccer squad, male or female, has qualified for the CONCACAF finals, where the top three teams will secure their tickets for the biggest soccer extravaganza in the world in their age group. A jubilant U17 women's soccer team flew home from Kingston Jamaica yesterday after accomplishing the feat on December 3rd. The team defeated Guyana 1-0 to qualify for the Women's U17 CONCACAF Finals as the third place team, joining Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica.

'The girls are very upbeat and very excited,' said Bahamas Football Association (BFA) vice President Fred Lunn yesterday. 'Saturday's win was a wonderful win for the girls. We're very excited. That's a very dedicated team and coaching staff right there. Despite not winning their first two, it was decent results because they played hard and the scores reflected that. We felt they played well and gave themselves a chance but just had some tough calls go against them. We're looking forward to the next step,' he added.

The Bahamas lost its first two matches of the Caribbean Football Union (CFU) Championships, 2-0 to the host country and 3-0 to Trinidad and Tobago, at the Anthony Spaulding sports complex in Kingston. Both teams were heavy favourites against The Bahamas. Even Trinidad Head Coach Stephan de Four couldn't help but give the Bahamian team credit for the way they played. 'They were a stubborn team to break down,' he was quoted as saying, 'They are a very hard working team but not too technical, but just as they provided some trouble for Jamaica, they did the same for us. In the end we managed to stay focused, carry out our game plan and come away with the win.'

Team Bahamas came back on Saturday to get past Guyana, 1-0. The Bahamas came into the match against Guyana with the edge over their opponents having conceded eight fewer goals, in the matches against Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica. It was 14 year old attacker Keisha McCartney who broke through for The Bahamas, scoring the team's only goal in the 43rd minute to propel the country into the CONCACAF finals.

With the win The Bahamas will now join Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica in the CONCACAF Under 17 Women's Championship, where the top three teams will qualify for the 2012 FIFA Under 17s Womens World Cup in Azerbaijan.

Trinidad and Tobago won the CONCACAF second round tournament this past weekend, defeating the hosts Jamaica 1-0 in the championship match on Saturday. 'It feels good to advance,' said Lunn, 'It's at a point now where the next round will be extremely tough, but the good thing is now the girls have the experience of playing against Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica. They know what to expect. I think that as a team, they just have to identify their strengths and weaknesses and take advantage of their opportunities when they present themselves. This will be an opportunity for them to work on areas they fell down on in Jamaica,' he added.

The CONCACAF Championships will be held from May 2-13 2012 in Guatemala, where the host country Mexico, the USA and Canada await. The Central American playoff winner between Costa Rica and Panama will complete the eight team line up. As for Team Bahamas, BFA Vice President Lunn said that the association is planning a social gathering for the girls on Friday night at the BFA's Centre for National Football Development where they will officially recognize them for their historic achievement.

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