

Bright future for the fellas...

SHIFAAN RYKLIFF

Rockafellas FC's under-14 side will be a team to look out for in the Mitchell's Plain Local Football Association (LFA) Champions League, next season.

Head coach Neil Smith guided his side to the top of the under-14 blue division table with an unbeaten run in the league.

And, leading from the front, captain Aqeel Sampson had the Midas Touch because everything his boot touched turned to gold – Sampson scored close to 100 league goals in all competitions.

Meanwhile, in the under-14 red division, Milano United achieved a similar report card.

They were unbeaten in their league and made a clean sweep by winning every trophy there was to play for at the Mitchell's Plain district.

Only time stood between Rockafellas and Milano before they eventually faced each other in the first of four clashes this season.

The build up to their matches was tense and their fierce rivalry brought out the best in the players. Fans who flocked to their derby matches were treated to exciting displays of youth football.

Smith, who's been with the club for over a decade, said it would have been a great end to the season if they were to face the Kinnes one more time.

"The first time we played Milano United was in the Knockout Cup semi-final which we lost 1-0. We played them again in the Divisional Cup final, and lost that match 2-1," said Smith.

"It's always tough playing against Milano and we got our first win against them in the Champs of Champs, earlier this month. It was goalless at full time and we beat them through a penalty shootout," he said.

Smith's side got their second win against Milano during the group stages of the FC Kapstadt Cup at the Hartleyville Stadium, last week.

The format of the under-14 division was five teams drawn into two groups, with the top two teams in each group going through to the semi-final.

Rockafellas topped their group – scoring 15 goals and conceding only one – and lost to FC Kapstadt Stars in the semi-final. Milano finished second in the group and played Rygersdal in the other semi-final clash.

"We lost to 2-1 to FC Kapstadt Stars in the semi-final. It was a good game, we had our chances but just couldn't finish them.

"They scored two quick goals in the second half, and we managed to pull one back, but it was too little too late for us," said Smith.

"We played our first group game on the Friday evening against PPG Khayelitsha and won 5-1. Our second game was against FC Kapstadt Legends who we beat 2-0; then followed that up with a 1-0 win against our rivals Milano United before beating Meadowridge 7-0 in our last group game.

"We were hoping to get Milano in the final again to settle it once and for all in our last game

of the season, but it wasn't to be," he said.

Milano beat the hosts 1-0 in the final to lift the cup, while Rockafellas' Sampson won the top goal-scorer award for his eight goals at the tournament.

With the curtains closed for the season, Rockafellas will have to wait a while longer to settle the score with Milano.

Apart from winning the blue division league title, they also won the first and second round league trophies; and won the Plate section of the Kensington tournament.

"We beat Hanover Park 3-0 in the final of the Kensington tournament," said Smith.

"Half of the squad will remain under-14 next season and I'll move up to the under-16 division with the other half.

"Our entire club is moving up to the Champions League because we've done well as a club and have accumulated a lot of points.

"Our Super League team won their league; our under-10 and first team finished runners-up; and the rest of the age divisions finished in the Top 3," he said.

Rockafellas victory against Milano in the Champs of Champs means they will now play against the champion teams from the various other football districts from across the city, to be crowned Western Cape champions.

"If we are successful in the Champs of Champs then we'll go on to represent the Western Cape in the SAFA Nike Cup national tournament. I've had this team together since under-9 so we also keeping them together and grooming them for the under-17 Engen tournament and under-19 Premier Cup," he said.



PICTURE: SHIFAAN RYKLIFF

Rockafellas captain Aqeel Sampson, centre, celebrates with his teammates after their 1-0 win against Milano at the FC Kapstadt Cup, last week.

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