

## Ayia Napa Youth Soccer Festival 2013

Summer, sun, beach and party might be the first words a normal person thinks about when he hears about Cyprus. The fewest people probably think about football. Understandable, because Cyprus isn't one of the biggest football nations in Europe. But every year there is a big tournament held in the city of Ayia Napa, the Ayia Napa Youth Soccer Festival where kids at the age between 7 and 17 play against each other. This youth tournament is the biggest on Cyprus and is held over four days at the football pitches of the Cyprus first division team AO Ayia Napa.

This year's matches were officiated by referees from Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Slovakia and Cyprus and the international cooperation in the referee teams worked as great as it did the years before.

Again we stayed in the Melpo Antia Hotel, which has just been renovated so that there have been some places inside the hotel that were unrecognizable. And also the food has been improved, although it has been good before in my opinion, but there have always been some persons who complained about it. The hotel staff was again very friendly, helpfully and always up for fun.

After our arrival the first meeting took place in the evening, where the rules of the different age classes have been explained and referee assignments were handed out. After that a special feature for the tournament has been introduced. Every referee "had to" pay a certain amount into a cash box. 1€ for a yellow card, 3€ for a red card, 5€ for sending off a coach and 10€ for a game suspension. At the end of the tournament there have been 118€ in the cash box which has been invested in beer and other drinks for us referees.

At the next day the tournament began. While the first referees had to start at 08:20 for their first matches, others rejoiced to sleep a bit longer. With buses, that are only fit for the scrap, we were brought to the pitches and later back to the hotel. But despite these old buses, we always arrived secure and without accidents. After arriving at the pitches we first went to the tournament office for getting a few bottles of water which were offered for free and looked for our pitch after that.

The matches of the Ayia Napa Youth Soccer Festival are mainly played by local teams and the matches mostly take place on a good level and proceed largely fair. But for referees, who go the first time to Cyprus, the local mentality needs getting used to. While the players overall don't complain much more than anywhere else, it could become a little louder behind the sidelines, when emotions of coaches and parents run wild. So sometimes it might be an advantage that you don't speak Greek. And in case coaches or spectators run riot, there are field manager on every pitch, who calm the coaches. In extreme cases, there is also security present, but these guys are luckily not needed too often. Like I said before, most matches were held fair and without nasty incidents.

When you had finished your matches, you could enjoy the Cyprus sun at the beach or the pool bar. Every evening there have been trips on the program, e. g. a visit in legendary Tommy's Pub. After the big final on the last day, everybody met for the final meeting in the hotel, where tournament boss Christos made a last speech and thanked the referees for their good work. As a sign of his appreciation all referees got free drinks for the rest of the evening.

I think I can speak for all referees when I say that the REFEX-Team with Michael Wachowiak, Oliver Dick, Silva Bohr and the new member Patric Waesch did a great job and could satisfy all referees.

The Ayia Napa Youth Soccer Festival has again been a great tournament with a lot of fun and nice matches. It is absolutely advisable for everyone and we look forward to next year.

Marc Schüler