**NY GREEK AMERICAN FACE TOLUCA, CRUZ AZUL DURING CONSECUTIVE CHAMPIONS’ CUP APPEARANCES**

*Historical Look Back At New York Side Competing At 1968, 1970 CONCACAF Club Tournaments*

With the New York Red Bulls visiting CD Guadalajara (Chivas) in the semifinals of the 2018 CONCACAF Champions League this week, we take a historical look back at the second-ever club from the ‘Big Apple’ to represent the United States at the annual confederation club tournament.

New York Greek American AA (Atlas Astoria) Soccer Club followed in the footsteps of fellow Cosmopolitan Soccer League member - NY Hungaria SC - as it qualified to two CONCACAF Champions’ Cup (1968, 1970).

Founded in 1941, NY Greek American secured its berth into the 1968 confederation event after capturing the National Challenge Cup (now U.S. Open Cup) the year before.

Under the direction of Alketas Panagoulias, who went on to coach his native Greece Men’s National Team as well the U.S. squad in the 1980’s, NY Greek American opened the 1968 tournament in Hamilton, Bermuda with a 2:1 loss to host Somerset Cricket Club on May 26.

Rudolph Smith and Roger Russell scored for the Bermudian side, while George Andreov had the only goal for the U.S. club at the Hamilton Stadium.

A week later (June 2), D. Tzimas’ goal gave the Greek American side a 1:0 victory over Somerset in the second-leg held at Randall’s Island Downing Stadium to force a playoff match at the same venue the following month.

John Kosmidis and Peter Tsalouhidis provided the tallies for the host in the 2:1 triumph against the two-time Bermudian champion during the playoff encounter on July 7.

Panagoulias’ squad progressed to the North American Zone Second Round of the Champions’ Cup and took on the two-time defending Mexican League Champion CD Toluca, who had former national team coach Ignacio Trelles at the helm.

A crowd of 12,000 witness Amaury Epaminondas score twice, while Francisco Linares and Felipe Ruvalcaba each added a tally for host Toluca in the 4:1 win over Greek American in the first-leg at Nemesio Diez Stadium on September 29.

In the second-leg a month later (October 6), the Diablos Rojos completed the sweep with a hard-fought 3:2 road victory against Greek American at Downing Stadium in front of 2,000 spectators.  Epaminondas, Ruvalcaba and Juan Dosal scored for Toluca, while Victor Jurisenvic and John Kosmides had the only tallies for the Greek American side in the loss.

Two years later, and after capturing its third consecutive U.S. Open Cup, the Greek American squad made its return the CONCACAF tournament (1970) and took on the defending champion CD SC Cruz Azul of Mexico.

Two-time Mexican League champion needed a goal from national team striker Octavio Muciño with six minutes remaining to defeat host Greek American, 1:0, in the first-leg held at Gaelic Park in front of 1,300 fans on June 30, 1970.

The return-leg two weeks later (July 12) had a crowd of 15,000 witnessing La Maquina blank the visiting Greek American side, 5:0, at Jasso’s 10 de Diciembre Stadium.  After an own goal, Cruz Azul added pair of tallies from Muciño and Jose Luis Guerrero in the win.  La Maquina, who were coached by three-time World Cup Mexican Legend Raúl Cárdenas.