

Action shifts to the merch tent after the big reveal.



USL League 1 President Lee O'Neill.

Soccer from A/21

the hoopla. They tossed out a plethora of miniature soccer balls with the team name and passed out flags.

After the reveal, the action shifted to the merch tent, where the team did a brisk business in logo-emblazoned jerseys, caps, pennants, and banners. What they are most interested in selling, though, said Moreno, is $25 deposits for season tickets. Everyone who plunks down their $25 is entitled to participate in a "pick your seat" event to be held in August. "We don't have a 50,000-seat arena," he noted – the stadium at PCSC holds about 5,000 spectators.

Once a head coach is in place, the team will hold player tryouts locally "late this summer," said Moreno, as well as looking for talent "nationally and internationally" this fall.

"FC Naples" – FC stands for "football club" seems like about the most obvious choice for a team name, but that makes sense, said Moreno. "It feels not creative, but sometimes the obvious choice is the best. After many conversations, everybody is proud of Naples." He said they had received input from close to 1,000 community members. Adding to the mix, this area already has a semi-pro soccer team called Naples United FC, which bills itself as "the first professional soccer team in Naples, FL."

FC Naples joins a host of other "FC" soccer sides, from international powerhouses such as FC Barcelona, England's Liverpool FC, and Chelsea FC, and several MLS teams in this country, including Dallas, Austin, Los Angeles, and the San Diego side scheduled, like FC Naples, to play their inaugural season in 2025.

FC Naples is one of five expansion franchises, augmenting the dozen existing clubs in the league. Current locations range from Statesboro, Georgia, to Spokane, Washington, along with Charlotte, North Carolina, Fresno, California, and Greenville, South Carolina. In addition to Naples, expansion teams will be located in Portland, Maine, Brooklyn, Santa Barbara, California; and Sherman, Texas.

Much like the East Coast Hockey League, in which the Estero-based Florida Everblades are the current reigning champions, USL-1 is what would be considered a minor or feeder league, with MLS, or Major League Soccer, the big league in the United States. South Florida has seen a surge of interest in soccer since the signing of Lionel Messi, the world's top player, to the Inter Miami MLS team. In two years, soccer's next FIFA World Cup championship will be hosted in various cities throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico. And the U.S. national women's team has already become the international powerhouse that the men's team has been projected to be for decades.

Soccer is big, it's local, and it's coming closer every month. Mark your calendar for next March for "a kick in the grass," and go to the FC Naples website at fcnaples.com to reserve your season tickets.

Sunshine Ace Hardware 100th Anniversary Block Party on June 29

Submitted

Sunshine Ace Hardware will host free, family-friendly 100th Anniversary Block Party events on June 29 to commemorate Ace Hardware's founding a century ago.

Visitors to the company's stores in Marco Island and East Naples will be treated to a festive atmosphere complete with complimentary grilled food prepared onsite by Sunshine Ace Hardware's own grill masters.

Ace Hardware was founded in 1924 by a group of five Chicago hardware store owners that changed the retail landscape by allowing individual stores to pool their buying power and purchase merchandise in bulk, ultimately passing those savings on to consumers. Today, Ace Hardware is the largest retailer-owned hardware cooperative in the world with over 5,900 locally owned and operated hardware stores in 60 countries.

Sunshine Ace Hardware's 100th Anniversary Block Party events run from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM on Saturday, June 29 at each of the Naples-based company's stores in Southwest Florida, including these southern Collier County locations:

Marco Island: 1720 San Marco Road
East Naples: 4433 Tamiami Trail East

Sunshine ACE Hardware

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