

**Carolina Lightnin' receives inaugural "National Champions Hall of Honor" from
North Carolina Soccer Hall of Fame**

The 1981 Carolina Lightnin', which celebrated the 30th anniversary of winning the American Soccer League championship, will be recognized as the first "National Champions Hall of Honor" team by the North Carolina Soccer Hall of Fame on January 21, 2012 at the Sheraton Four Seasons – Greensboro.

The Lightnin', which averaged over 6,000 a game, defeated the New York United 2-1 on the championship game in front of a record crowd of 20,183 at Charlotte's Memorial Stadium on Sept. 18, 1981. The Lightnin' went 19-10-3 in 1981, the first of three seasons in the American Soccer League.

Tony Suarez, the MVP of the championship game, was the 1981 ASL Rookie of the Year, and was named to the ASL First Team All-Star team along with Don Tobin. The Lightnin' was coached by former Tampa Bay Rowdies star Rodney Marsh.

After the ASL went into dormancy following the 1983 season, most of the team played one more season as the Charlotte Gold in the United Soccer League. The Gold closed operations after the 1984 season.

Along with the Lightnin' National Champions Hall of Honor recognition, two players from that Lightnin' team – Bill Finneyfrock and Tony Suarez – will be inducted into the NC Soccer Hall of Fame – Class of 2012.