

THE NEW JERSEY SOCCER GROUP

Press Release



**Blaze Unable to Overturn Two-Goal Deficit in Last 2010 Away Game
Maryland—July 10th, 2010**



The New Jersey Blaze fell foul of a competent but physical TSC Maryland Red Devils team for the second and final time this season, finishing the squad's last away tie of the 2010 campaign 2-1 after they were unable to hold off the hosts.

The Red Devils' first goal was converted in the 32nd minute when Anthony Okodua was able to capitalize on a poor touch by the Blaze defense near the halfway line. This enabled him to take the ball up the field into a one-on-one challenge with keeper Kevin Gramata and make it 1-0.

Head coach of the Blaze Rob Napier explained that his team seemed to show more desire in the first period than their rivals, though this was not reflected in the scoreline. "At half-time, we established the need to stay focused, be more clinical and step up our speed of play in the attacking third," he explained. Tony Corbett, the general manager of the Red Devils, had other priorities. "We wanted to keep up a good tempo but also be mindful of positioning, so we weren't caught off guard while in the lead."

The Blaze's direction would be almost instantly undermined after just three minutes of the second half, when Okodua struck again, picking up a loose ball at the back and getting his shot around the keeper's left. "It was a killer after the half-time team-talk," said Napier. Thankfully, Ansgar Otto - who has been a remarkable asset to the Blaze this season on the right-hand side and as a striker - was able to convert during the 60th minute, getting the ball into the box before eventually maneuvering around defenders and slotting it in. Otto formed a major part of the offense, notching up eight of the Blaze's ten shots during the game. However, he and the team were unable to find the net a second time.

Meanwhile, a number of other players had strong performances for the Blaze, despite the loss. Coron Short, who was struggling with illness, was able to overcome his difficulties and put in a solid game. Napier continued: "He gave everything despite not feeling 100% and came up with several impressive examples of mature defending by not diving in, blocking when necessary, timing challenges well and being a threat with his throw-ins." Furthermore, Mick Samaroo performed solidly in defensive-midfield. "He displayed excellent energy and competitiveness," the head coach added, continuing his praise. "Alexis Gallice and Mathieu Larroutourou also linked together well, showing good understanding on the field."

Additionally, the coach praised the team's workrate and unity. "They were very determined and we played some good quality soccer, building through the levels while maintaining good energy."

However, the Blaze's inability to take their chances early in the game ultimately cost them. "We dominated the game for the first 30 minutes but if you don't score when you're on top, it doesn't really matter," Napier explained. "While their keeper Rob Hollasch pulled off a great save from a shot by Larroutourou, shots went wide, we missed out on a strong penalty call and a couple of the same old issues cropped up."

He added: "As has often happened this season, it was another lapse in concentration that was punished in the first half, while their second goal soon after the break was a real blow. Our 13-man squad struggled against their physical game." He also cited a lack of combination play at the front of the field, restricting attacks to one-man runs. Set-pieces also lacked, Napier believed.

Corbett was happy with the overall performance of the Red Devils. "The game was very typical of our season as a whole in that we felt we had plenty of chances but that it was just a matter of finishing them. This time round against the Blaze, we were more determined on defense as we had been leaking goals. We were very determined to try and our first season on a high note and I'm glad we did."

With one game to go this season, Rob Napier and his team have a lot to prove in the final tie at home to FC Reading Revolution on Wednesday night. "We need to show that we're a better team than the table shows. There have been several very close games and it's often come down to very small details and - dare one say it - misfortune, at times.

"We want to go out on a high and get the win we deserve; the players are itching to get it and we know we have what it takes to beat FC Revolution."

The [New Jersey Blaze](#) are the central New Jersey members of the [National Premier Soccer League](#), the highest level of men's amateur soccer in the United States. They are part of the [New Jersey Soccer Group](#), a management company for a family of soccer based organizations offering a full range of soccer services in New Jersey.