

# THE NEW JERSEY SOCCER GROUP

## Press Release



**Community Spirit Galvanizes Blazing Desires to Draw Level With Snow**  
South Brunswick, NJ—May 28th, 2010



It was clear from tonight's game between the New Jersey Blaze and the Pocono Snow that the Blaze, in their first-ever home game, have a bright future ahead of them. With around 350 people turning out for the return-leg rematch following the Blaze's first-day defeat of the Snow in Pennsylvania, community spirit was high in the central New Jersey township as people young and old turned out for the game.

The first ten minutes were largely midfield-oriented, as both teams attempted to push the ball forward while the squads' defenses locked down at the back, allowing only a couple of speculative shots from range for both teams. William Paterson defender Steven DeMatteo linked up with Robert Campos to force the first save from veteran Snow keeper Greg Sherwood, while at the other end, South Brunswick boy Kevin Gramata saw his first of many strong saves after a ball fizzed from the foot of Snow forward Shastri Spencer, who would consistently test Gramata throughout the game.

However, first blood would soon go to the visitors. A well-taken corner from Kriswayne Wallace was picked up in the centre of the box by Danny Drago, who calmly headed the ball into the net. It would not be long, however, before the assembled masses would again encourage the Blaze to drive through the Snow as they marched back up the pitch through a series of good passes and powerful throw-ins, including several from star player and captain Coron Short (right), another South Brunswick local who had a loyal following of family and friends behind him. His powerful throws provided the midfield with free kick-like ball placement, though strong communication between Snow defenders Wallace and Roy Thompson proved effective at staving off the barrage.

The teams soon became more aggressive as boundless energy surged in the centre of the field, resulting in a number of strong tackles and quick passes. The Snow briefly gained the upper hand, though midfielder Kamar Samuels and Roshane Ellison both fired into Gramata's strong grasp, proving why the keeper is an asset to both the Blaze and Montclair State.

Ellison's back heel to Jason Rudder nearly put the Snow at 2-0, alongside amazing one-on-one skills from Spencer against the Blaze's defenders, though the home team had the final say going into the half as a shot from Campos grazed the top of the crossbar, beating Sherwood. Working well on the flanks in particular, the Blaze were extremely close to bringing themselves back into the game before the whistle.

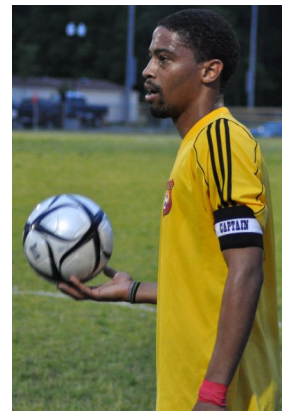
"We had to get the basics right in terms of passes and speed of play during the break," asserted Blaze head coach Rob Napier. "Anticipation was also key at half-time, and the players certainly listened carefully and fully understood what was expected of them."

Fresh from the break, the Blaze started to move the ball up from the back after no-nonsense defending between Stevenson's Sam Bryant and Lee Selby, another Brunswick local, while Kyle Saviano's performance at right-back was also commendable. Forcing the Snow onto the back foot was Larry Geraghty, the Montclair State striker who was substituted on at half-time in the hope that he would recreate the magic of the team's first game, when he scored the tie's only goal.

The fans were not short of drama as a ten-minute spell saw Ansgar Otto, another half-time sub, terrorize the left wing with remarkable skills linking up with Geraghty's head, saved well by Sherwood. Meanwhile, Ellison was picked up with plenty of space from a cross, though Gramata charged down the fearsome strike, winning over his home crowd yet again. "They were quick along the ground tonight - a lot of kick-and-run tactics," Gramata explained. "I think we played more as a team as we progressed and we started to pick them apart, leading to the fight-back. We made a couple of mistakes during the game, but we were sure to make up for them."

It would be Geraghty who would again prove to be the game-breaker for the Blaze. In a free kick from around 20 yards out, Geraghty - who was instrumental in Montclair's capture of its fourth straight NJAC Championship late last year - curled the ball along the floor and around the wall, slotting it into the bottom right of the goal. The fans erupted in cheers, though the equalizer would be short-lived.

In an attempt to clear the ball, Gramata and Short were unable to keep Jason Rudder from netting the Snow's second against the run of play. An intense atmosphere descended upon Rowland Park, though the Blaze would ultimately prove that they would be fighters, not quitters, under the pressure of the floodlights, as well as their friends' and families' supportive gaze.



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As the referee signaled for added time in the 90th minute, Geraghty hammered the ball towards goal with such force that the crossbar rang like a church bell, bouncing down and spinning away from Sherwood. As the keeper scrambled to get a hold on it, Otto's brilliant pace allowed him to seize the ball from the Snow and push it into the back of the net. The large crowd celebrated wildly as the Blaze claimed the point they certainly deserved from a close-fought contest, eroding the league lead the Snow had gained early in the campaign through back-to-back wins against the TSC MD Red Devils and FC Reading Revolution last week.

Rob Napier believed this run of form from the Snow had brought a lot of confidence to Rowland Park. "Their rhythm was better than in our previous meeting and they certainly seemed more familiar with each other," he explained. "However, we had numerous good performances that were able to counteract this. Our defenders proved to be solid and the half-time substitutions of Otto and Larry paid dividends.



"Our team play in general will improve over the next few days, as well as during the season," Napier added. "Nonetheless, this was a well-deserved result for the lads and I'm proud of their achievements tonight."

And for the fan turnout, Napier was understandably ecstatic. "This is the dream for South Brunswick, to see a real community team where the whole family can enjoy themselves, see some top quality soccer and go away happy safe in the knowledge that they've had fun. It definitely made a difference on the field and created a true soccer atmosphere."

Gramata (left) said of the chance to work between the posts in front of his home town: "I haven't played at Rowland Park since I was about nine or ten years old. It was awesome, a really good atmosphere that I hope we'll have throughout the season."

Captain Coron Short, whose leadership did not go amiss during the tie, was keen to back up his counterparts. "It was exciting and a lot of fun, especially being my home town. The Snow were athletic and strong but with the crowd behind us, we pushed as hard as we could and we got the result."

Looking forward to the rest of the season, Short added: "We have the manpower to excel in the league, so long as we're consistent."

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.