

THE NEW JERSEY SOCCER GROUP

Press Release



Home Win Fits the Bill for Buffalo
Buffalo, NY—June 6th, 2010



FC Buffalo handed the New Jersey Blaze their second defeat in as many days as the home team scored the franchise's first-ever goals in front of the vocal home crowd at All-High Stadium, NY. While improvements were made to the team's work ethic and tactics in response to the 4-1 loss against Erie in PA the night before, the desired result did not come for the Blaze despite an even display.

The Montclair State partnership of goalkeeper Kevin Gramata and defensive captain Coron Short proved instrumental in marshaling the game from the back of the field in the first half, as the Blaze worked the ball away from the danger zone as Buffalo encroached. While many solid opportunities came Gramata's way, each save looked comfortable and his powerful arm was able to distribute the ball to the midfield with ease. Passes in the Blaze midfield were strong and accurate though Buffalo played a very similar style in the centre of the field, resulting in a half that largely took place around the middle third.

"We had a lack of cohesion on the attack," head coach Rob Napier explained. "I think our confidence and self-belief was still a little affected by yesterday's game at Erie, but this was addressed at half time and our game improved as a result."

Despite the lack of clear-cut chances in front of Buffalo's goal, the first half was memorable for Ansgar Otto's dependable pace on the wing, as the Stevenson midfielder worked on the right before being switched to the left to take advantage of the weaker flank. Meanwhile, Julian Valerio, the William Paterson forward, was able to use his skills to negotiate key one-on-ones with the support of Pennsylvanian defender Thomas Kelly. However, the Buffalo defense remained steadfast.

Kelly, FDU's Kyle Saviano and Loyola's Michael Samaroo, alongside Short, continued to hold a firm line at the back. Aside from a chance that was firmly intercepted by a brave diving save from Gramata after 33 minutes, Buffalo were restricted to uncertain shots from range. Going into the half at 0-0, and despite excellent work in midfield, the Blaze were still lacking in the attacking quarter. "We were unable to get our attacking game off the ground before the break but we came out in the second half with a much more aggressive attitude," Napier explained.

The team tested the goalkeeper early on, with two notable Valerio strikes catching the goalkeeper off his line, forcing him to roll back for the catch. Buffalo proved to be strong on the counter-attack but again, the back four - bolstered by fresh substitution Lee Selby, the strong left-back from FDU College at Florham - handled the shots and redistributed them under pressure. "Our passing was much fresher than against Erie," Napier explained.

Decisions did not go the team's way, however. A goal for the Blaze was ruled offside while possible handball was waved away by the referee shortly before a counterattack brought about Buffalo's first goal. Fifteen yards out, Andy Tiedt slotted in the final ball from Daniel Stevens on 64 minutes, undermining the hard work of the Blaze. "It was a sucker punch, particularly after the decision going against us," Napier said.

Charging down the pitch, the Blaze had several more chances but to no avail, while Gramata held up well between the pipes. Four minutes of extra time were added on and in the dying moments, Scott Zorn went unassisted to fire in a second, though Napier felt the final result was not indicative of the hard work put in throughout the match by his squad.

"I thought we were the best team overall," he said. "Buffalo are a good team but I think we dealt with them well for the vast majority of the game. We created goal scoring opportunities and while we didn't capitalize and lost 2-0, the score was not a fair reflection.

"I think we can turn around the season at home. With four of our away games coming over two weekends alone, we knew we would be up against it early in the campaign." Napier concluded: "We're focusing on fine-tuning our attacking game and I think we can overturn Maryland (1-1-1) next week before our penultimate away game at FC Revolution."

On Wednesday June 9th at 7:30pm, the Blaze will host the TSC MD Red Devils at Rowland Park in South Brunswick and aim to put their season back on track on home turf. Meanwhile Buffalo face a tricky tie at FC Sonic's Ulrich Sports Complex. The Blaze and Buffalo will meet again on June 27th at Rowland, with a 7:30pm kick-off.

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.