

Orlando City SC Lions Draw Pittsburgh Riverhounds in Final USL PRO Home Opener at ESPN Wide World of Sports

Orlando City SC set to play 13 more matches at ESPN Wide World of Sports during 2014 USL PRO season

Orlando City SC drew the Pittsburgh Riverhounds 1-1 at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex on Saturday, March 29. Defender Luke Boden provided the equalizer in the 58th minute as City drew their second consecutive match in the early stages of their final USL PRO campaign.

“I have a lot of confidence in this group, despite the result,” said Head Coach Adrian Heath. “We scored a lot of goals in the past three years and I guarantee that we’ll score more goals this year.”

In their first home game at ESPN Wide World of Sports, City began in typical fashion, controlling the pace of the game in the early stages. The Lions entertained large amounts of possession in midfield and the final third, but were also equally impressive in defence, allowing Pittsburgh very little time on the ball.

City’s cohesive high-pressure defending forced the Riverhounds to employ route one tactics and knock the ball long, rather than allowing them any threatening build-up play through the middle of the park.

On the other hand, Orlando’s midfielders were in complete control in the first 45, leading to several quality opportunities for the hosts. Orlando’s first MLS signee, Kevin Molino, provided the first chance for the Lions when he curled a dangerous effort that went just past the post.

Following Molino’s effort, Hertzog also added two close chances that kept visiting Goalkeeper Hunter Gilstrap on his toes. Left and right fullbacks, Luke Boden and U.S. international Tyler Turner, also got involved in the attack and provided multiple crosses to the near-post for Hertzog from deep inside Pittsburgh’s half.

Luckily for Gilstrap, the Riverhounds’ defense did well to make several last minute clearances and prevent Hertzog from earning his first goal in purple and white.

On the other end, Pittsburgh’s few chances came primarily from set pieces as Orlando’s organized defending made it difficult for them to gain a real grip on the match. The visiting’s side’s best chance of the half came when lethal striker Jose Angulo almost nodded home a chance in the 27th minute, but saw it skip off the cross-bar.

Valentino and Rusin managed Angulo quite capably in the first period, but the poaching striker, who scored a team-high 13 goals last season, was able to break through in the second half. In the 48th minute, City fans argued for a foul as Angulo knocked Valentino to the ground and skipped past Gallardo to put the visitors up 1-0.

Nevertheless, City would continue to dominate the run of play and would fight back to level the score-line.

After progressing their way down the pitch, Orlando earned a corner in the 58th minute, which led to a cracking finish from Boden. Gilstrap was able to punch away Molino’s initial cross, but the former Sheffield Wednesday defender was left all alone inside the area and controlled the ball well before volleying a powerful strike into the top-corner.

Adding to Pittsburgh’s woes, Gilstrap was also injured during the set-piece and reserve ‘keeper Greg Blum was brought in for relief, giving City more of a reason to fire away at the target. In light of the Lions’ equalizer, Pittsburgh began to show a bit of attacking life but Orlando regained their first-half form and re-took control of the game.

In the waning moments of the match, Head Coach Adrian Heath also brought on Forward Dennis Chin for Aodhan Quinn and moved Ceren alongside Alvarez, providing attacking flare and defensive support simultaneously as Orlando kept probing for the winner.

In the 83rd minute, Chin came close to providing the second goal for City but his header went just wide of the post. With time ticking away, the Lions' chances of gaining three points were beginning to look slim until the fourth official announced seven minutes of stoppage time.

As Pittsburgh bunkered in, Orlando continued pushing forward with multiple attacking players but key saves by Blum maintained a 1-1 score through 90 minutes. The draw against Pittsburgh marks the second consecutive match in which the Lions have conceded early before battling back to earn a point.

Orlando City will continue their home stretch, when they take on the Rochester Rhinos at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 5, at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex.

For more information, visit www.orlandocitysoccer.com

Media interested in credentials should complete the online request form at http://www.orlandocitysoccer.com/gamecenter/parking_credentials/

About Orlando City Soccer Club:

Orlando City Soccer Club (OCSC) is Major League Soccer's newest expansion team. The club will begin play in MLS in 2015, becoming the league's 21st club. The Lions' first team has won two USL PRO regular season titles and two postseason championships and will continue play in USL PRO in 2014 at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex. Outside of the first squad, OCSC also has a youth club, Orlando City Youth Soccer (OCYS) and a U-23 team that participates in the PDL. For more information on the pro and youth clubs, visit www.OrlandoCitySC.com and www.OrlandoCityYouth.org.