

Diyaeddine Abzi's attacking creativity, playmaking vision, a massive loss for York United

By Robert Belardi

York United FC announced the departure of Diyaeddine Abzi last week, as the 23-year-old fullback is set to join Pau FC in Ligue 2 in France.

The Moroccan-born player, who grew up in Montreal, has been one of the York United's most coveted stars.

His dominant left-boot has doled out tantalizing dribbling skills, creative vision and majestic set-piece opportunities.

Since the announcement, it was agreed Abzi would take on Pacific FC over the weekend and just Wednesday, against the Vancouver Whitecaps for the Canadian Championship.

Abzi has shown what this league is all about. A young player was presented with a platform and handed an opportunity that he's harnessed and really made his own. Now we see him move to an illustrious football nation and into one of the most scouted leagues in world football. That was crucial to us because in addition to the transfer fee, we also have a significant sell-on clause should he move on from Pau in the future," said York United FC's president, CEO and GM, Angus McNab in a statement.

When watching York United, it is incredibly difficult to miss #20 grace the left-hand side of the pitch and it was evident in this weekend's match against a tough Pacific FC side.

Defensive structure was the name of the game in this match as York United FC and Pacific FC reached a 0-0 stalemate at the end of 90 minutes.

But if it was anyone that would have been the eventual reason for breaking the deadlock it would have been Abzi. Not once, but twice.

In the 52nd minute, Abzi pushed up the pitch and received a pass from Isaiah Johnston. From the left-hand side of the 18-yard box, Abzi whipped a low ball across the face of goal that managed to squeak through everyone and found an open Max Ferrari in front of goal. To everyone's surprise, Ferrari mishandled the pass and punched the ball over the net.

Just four minutes later, Abzi pushed up once again and received a pass from Mateo Hernandez. Abzi shouldered off a back-tracking Marco Bustos and cleared a sliding challenge from Amer Didic to break free on goal.

Abzi ended up missing the target completely.

He continued to push and a long ball from Jordan Wilson broke Abzi free on the left side. One-on-one against Olakunle Dada-Luke, Abzi's sweet stepovers turned the fullback right around before throwing the ball on goal at Callum Irving and almost into the back of the net.

"Yeah, I've had good conversations with Abzi. He's just got to go and work hard. I think he's got all the tools it takes to succeed at the next level. He's got to keep an open mind, look to learn as much as he can and keep putting the work in," said head coach Martin Nash following the draw against Pacific FC. He's a tremendous athlete, tremendous technical player. He's got a ton of upside. I hope and expect we won't see him in the CPL for some time."

In another scoreless outing for York United, both Isaiah Johnston and Nash alluded to the fact that the goals will come eventually. All it might take is one, to simply open up the floodgates.

The Nine Stripes took on the Vancouver Whitecaps last night on the road.

The boys will come home to take on Valour FC this Sunday at York Lions Stadium. Kick-off is at 12.00 p.m.