

York United have a lot to be proud of and that's not a statement to take lightly

By Robert Belardi

Heading into this season, York United faced a hefty amount of doubt.

Nobody gave them a chance.

The Nine Stripes were looked at as the babies of the Canadian Premier League. This was the youngest squad, a fusion of young flair with a go-for-it-all mojo. Of course, there was some old wisdom in the mix and that plays its part as well.

But against all odds and proving everyone wrong, York United travelled to Tim Hortons Field last Sunday and yes, it was for a playoff match. York took on two-time champions Forge FC on their home turf and in this one, it was experience that did the trick.

For Forge FC, they've been here before and nine minutes into the match, their tempo and control of the match immediately dictated how this was going to go.

A neat ball from Tristan Borges slipped through Jordan Wilson and Chrisnovic N'sa, catching Woobens Pacius on the run. The forward tucked the ball off of the post and into the back of the net to give Forge the lead.

Skipping all the way to the 38 minute, York United had a life-line. A failed, headered clearance from Daniel Krutzen was controlled splendidly from Michael Petrasso. Instantly, Petrasso caught goalkeeper Triston Henry off his line and swooped the ball up and over the goalkeeper to put York level.

"That goal was a life-line for us. It gave us that little spark we needed going into the half. We were going to try and use that as momentum going into the second half. We were trying to work out things tactically to get more shots on target because we didn't have many in the first half," said York United defender Dominick Zator in the post-match press conference.

"Obviously, we had the wind and the rain going with us the second half. Still Forge made it difficult for us to get anything on target."

With only four shots forward and one hitting the target in the first half, York United's offence was shut down completely in the second half having only mustered two shots towards goal.

Joshua Navarro got the go-ahead goal in the 66 minute and just seven minutes later, Noah Verhoeven scored an own-goal that put the match out of reach.

After the game, there was nothing but high praise from Zator to the rest of the group.

"Looking at the whole season, just immensely proud of the boys. Everyone counted us out from the start, everyone was thinking we're going to finish last. So, the whole season was about proving people wrong," Zator said.

When everybody went back into the locker room, this was also the first words out of head coach Jimmy Brennan's mouth.

"I'm very proud of them. After the match I told them right away I said, "Look guys, what you've been through as a group. How hard this season was to get to the playoffs, it's been a great season for them," Brennan said.

"Obviously for them it's disappointing because they wanted to get to the final but the good thing is they got a taste of it. Especially the young guys, they got a taste of how hard a grueling season can be after 28 games. Then they got a taste of playoffs so they

gained an awful lot of experience throughout this season. As a group, I couldn't be any more proud of them.?

Heading into the offseason, Brennan said it's about adding the right pieces.

A turnover in the offseason for a Canadian Premier League club could be heavy or it could be filled with nothing at all. By the sounds of it, York United will most likely look to keep a core group of players and add a piece or two to challenge the title.

For a group that was so young and with nothing to lose, they counted everyone out. They will surely leave everyone with a remark after this season and that is to never be counted out again.

As for Forge FC, they will be taking on Pacific FC in the Canadian Premier League final.

The final will take place at Tim Hortons Field on Sunday December 5. Kick-off is scheduled at 4.30 p.m.