

York United: Not quite the right send-off for Abzi, hiccup against Valour

By **Robert Belardi**

York United fell 2-1 to the Vancouver Whitecaps in the Canadian Championship semifinals last week and returned home to York Lions Stadium over the weekend to fall 3-1 to Valour FC.

As reported last week, the Canadian Championship semi-final was the final match for York United fullback Diyaeddine Abzi.

Abzi is off to Ligue 2 to join Pau FC.

The Nine Stripes put on a display of their defensive talents and abilities, however this game was all about the Vancouver Whitecaps.

The Whitecaps dominated the game entirely from start to finish. The club held 57 per cent possession throughout the match and put forth 17 shots towards goal with six of them on target.

It took the MLS side 53 minutes to finally get a goal on the scoreboard.

Ryan Gauld passed the ball out wide to Ryan Raposo. On the volley, Raposo's shot was tipped on to the bar by York goalkeeper Niko Giantsopoulos. The rebound fell to forward Brian White, who volleyed the ball in to open the scoring.

The 61st minute was York United's first real chance to score a goal and it was Abzi on the tail end of that chance. From a freekick, Abzi whipped the ball low around the wall, forcing Cody Cropper to make a good stop.

In the 73rd minute, Brian White found the back of the net this time on the half-volley from a cross into the box from Ryan Gauld to extend the lead.

In the 84th minute, a wonderful creative play from Isaiah Johnston put York United in striking distance.

But it was too little too late for the CPL side, as the Whitecaps will now square-off against Toronto FC for the Voyageurs Cup for the first time since 2018.

The final will be held at BC Place in Vancouver on Tuesday, July 26. Kick-off is at 10.30 p.m. EST.

Returning home to take on Winnipeg's Valour FC, York immediately began the match on the front foot.

A cross from Max Ferrari found Osaze De Rosario in the box and but Valour goalkeeper Jonathan Sirois came to the rescue early.

Similarly to the Vancouver game, it took over 50 minutes for the first breakthrough. Walter Ponce, from the right-hand side of the 18-yard area slid the ball across the face of goal to Alessandro Riggi who made no mistake and Valour took the lead.

Just a minute later, York United retaliated right off the kick off. Chrisnovic N'Sa's cross found the head of De Rosario who capitalized on his chance to tie things up.

But, since the equalizer, it seemed as if Valour had the edge and the visiting side took advantage of their chances moving forward. Moses Dyer and Sean Rea made it 3-1 by the end of the match.

For the second game in a row as well, York failed to uphold north of 50 per cent possession. The Nine Stripes also conceded 17 shots towards goal.

?I thought they were really preventable goals. As the game went on we looked tired. It was a tough game today. We've played four games in 12 days,? said Head Coach Martin Nash in the post-game press conference.

In the press conference as well, Nash confirmed Giantsopoulos was playing the game with a bruise on his quad. The York goalkeeper, struggled to kick the ball and other players had to step in to boot the ball long from a goal kick.

Next up for York is a game on the road against FC Edmonton for Canada Day.

Kick-off is at 6 p.m. EST.