Press Release

**Contact:** Sean Doyle, Director of Social Media

sean@readingunitedac.com

484-269-0319

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Bethlehem Steel, Reading United to take part in soccer doubleheader** *Union affiliates will play league matches at Lehigh University’s Goodman Stadium*

**READING, PA. (May 4, 2016)** – Major League Soccer’s Philadelphia Union have been hard at work building a dynamic player development model that strives to allow young players to progress along a path to professional soccer.

Two of the pillars of the Philadelphia Union’s player development model will be showcased as part of a unique soccer event. On Sunday, May 15th at Lehigh University’s Goodman Stadium, Union affiliates Bethlehem Steel FC and Reading United AC will share the field as part of an exciting soccer doubleheader. United will play local rivals Lehigh Valley United in their Premier Development League season opener at 12:00pm while Steel FC face FC Montreal in an important USL Eastern Conference clash at 4:00pm.

Bethlehem Steel and Reading United have forged a special bond. Long time Reading United head coach Brendan Burke is now in charge of Steel FC. While with Reading, Burke led the club to 71 victories and qualified for the PDL playoffs in each of his six seasons in charge. Player development was Burke’s forte as he helped Reading produce over forty future professional soccer players, including Union first team players Keegan Rosenberry, C.J. Sapong and Ray Gaddis.

Current Reading United Head Coach Stephen Hogan serves as one of Burke’s assistant coaches with Steel FC. Hogan was a teammate of and was coached by Burke during their time with Reading.

Reading alums John McCarthy and Leo Fernandes have played an important role for Bethlehem while on loan from the Philadelphia Union. McCarthy has recorded three shutouts for Steel while Fernandes has been instrumental as part of the Bethlehem attack.

“Collaborating with Reading United and Lehigh Valley United is the perfect opportunity to bring more soccer to Goodman Stadium and we look forward to seeing our dedicated fans at both games,” Bethlehem Steel FC Managing Director Rich Searls said.

United will look to get off to a fast start in 2016 Mid-Atlantic Division race with a win over Lehigh Valley at Goodman Stadium. In last season’s PDL opener, hosts Lehigh Valley United held Reading to a 0-0 draw, while in the season finale Reading scored an emphatic 7-1 home win over their local rivals.

Reading club president Art Auchenbach is looking forward to this showcase event, stating, “As the Official PDL Affiliate of the Philadelphia Union, Reading United is excited to continue our budding rivalry with LVU Sonic.  Obviously changes made with both our organizations brings further competitive fire as Reading looks to our new coaching staff to continue our established tradition of excellence and player development.  We’re sure LVU is looking to rebound from their difficult 2015 season and prove they belong with the elite teams of the PDL Mid Atlantic Division.  We will play each other three times this season and the season opener will be a small glimpse into what each of us will be bringing to the 2016 PDL season.”

Auchenbach continued, “We are very fortunate to be able to support the Union player development structure by allowing the LVU and Reading players the opportunity to be seen by Philadelphia Union and Bethlehem Steel coaching staffs.  Being part of a PDL/USL doubleheader will be great for fans of the Steel and Reading United as they likely will be watching a few of the players that will be featuring in future Bethlehem Steel or Philadelphia Union teams!

Reading United play their first home match of the season when they face the Atlanta Silverbacks in the first round of the 2016 Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup on Wednesday, May 11th at 7:00pm at Wilson High School’s Gurski Stadium.

United’s first home league match will take place on Saturday, May 28th at 7:00pm at Exeter’s Don Thomas Stadium. United will welcome the reigning PDL Eastern Conference Champions, the New York Red Bulls U23s, in a crucial early season match-up that will set the tone in the Mid-Atlantic Divisional title race. Tickets for the home opener are available at www.readingunitedac.com or on game day at the Don Thomas Stadium ticket office. Reading United offer 2016 Game Day Youth Packages, Group Discount Packages, Birthday Parties and Fundraising Ticket Packages.  Contact our ticket sales team at sales@readingunitedac.com for all your group needs.

**ABOUT READING UNITED AC**

Reading United A.C. is the Greater Reading area’s premier minor league soccer team. Led by the ownership group of Berks Professional Sports, Inc. the club was founded in 1995 as the Reading Rage. As the club entered its 15th season a name, logo, and color change was made to better feature the ties to the local and state community as well as the soccer goals of the team and its partners. Now in its twenty-first season, Reading United’s commitment to professional player development has produced over fifty players currently on the rosters of professional clubs throughout the United States, Europe and Latin America. Reading United is the official Premier Development League affiliate of Major League Soccer’s Philadelphia Union. For more information about Reading United AC, visit [www.readingunitedac.com](http://www.readingunitedac.com).