



Reading United A.C.
3103 Paper Mill Rd.
Wyomissing, PA 19610
www.readingunitedac.com

Press Release

Contact: Sean Doyle, Media Coordinator
sean@readingunitedac.com
484-269-0319

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Late comeback powers Reading United past Lehigh Valley *Goals by Ezana Kahsay and Spence Burkhardt help United score 3-2 victory*

READING, PA (July 14, 2018) – Reading United A.C. (12-0-2) rallied from a two goal deficit to defeat visiting Lehigh Valley United, 3-2, in Saturday night's Premier Development League regular season finale at Wilson High School's Gurski Stadium. A furious late comeback that saw Reading score three times in ten minutes, led by midfielder Ezana Kahsay's brace, helped secure Reading's first ever undefeated season and sent the Mid-Atlantic Division champions into the postseason on a high.

Despite a handful of chances to open the scoring inside the game's first ten minutes, Reading found themselves trailing midway through the first half. Lehigh Valley United got on the scoreboard first when Jason Rocha took a scuffed shot that looked to be headed wide. Sky Rimmle stayed even with Reading's backline and positioned himself well to deflect Rocha's errant effort past Reading goalkeeper Bennet Strutz to give the visitors a 1-0 lead.

Lehigh Valley United (1-12-1) would stun the large crowd at Gurski Stadium early in the second half when they doubled their advantage. Shaquille Stephenson scored on a corner kick in the 56th minute to put Reading in a two-goal deficit for the first time this season.

Moments later, it appeared that Lehigh Valley United handed Reading a lifeline. Substitute forward Jeremy Rafanello was hauled down in the Lehigh Valley penalty area and the referee awarded Reading United a penalty kick in the 59th minute. Reading captain Aaron Molloy took the kick and powered a shot that Lehigh goalkeeper Mike Kennelly blocked to preserve the visitors two goal advantage.

Trailing by two goals late in the match, Reading United Head Coach Alan McCann made a tactical adjustment when he subbed out defender Dawson McCartney for speedy midfielder Spencer Burkhardt in the 75th minute. The extra attacker paid dividends immediately.

In the 77th minute, Zach Zandi ignited the Reading comeback when he hit a cutting pass to Ezana Kahsay at the top of the penalty area. Kahsay pivoted and rifled a shot into the upper corner of the goal to cut Lehigh Valley's advantage in half.

Seven minutes later, Reading would draw level. Burkhardt made a lung busting run from deep in the Reading United midfield looking to get behind the Lehigh Valley defensive line. Zandi picked out the run and lobbed a pass over the Lehigh Valley back four and hit Burkhardt in stride. Burkhardt had Kennelly at his mercy and buried his shot into the back of the net to tie the match at 2-2.

Kahsay would be the hero in Reading's comeback when he'd score the go ahead goal. Collecting a pass from Matt Greer, Kahsay curled his effort around Kennelly and into the back of the net to make it 3-2, pushing Reading United to their first lead of the evening in the 86th minute.

There was no late magic for Lehigh Valley as the referee's final whistle signaled Reading's 3-2 victory and secured the club's first-ever undefeated season. The dramatic win was Reading's seventh consecutive victory over their nearest rivals.

Coach McCann spoke after the match about his squad's gutsy comeback saying, "It's the character we see everyday in training. It's a group of players that have taken ownership, taken responsibility and taken leadership. This group has really embraced it and you can see it out there. Even when Aaron Molloy missed the penalty kick, heads didn't go down, they're still driving forward." He continued, "We said if we get one goal, we'll get three. We know the character of this team and the belief they have in each other, they're oozing with confidence. Even at 2-0 down, it may have felt like it wasn't going to be our night, but we know our boys and we weren't going out without a fight. That's their character."

Reading United will now host the PDL Eastern Conference Final Four at Gurski Stadium. Reading, along with Northeast Division champions Black Rock FC, South Atlantic Division champions Myrtle Beach Mutiny and the Eastern Conference Wild Card New York Red Bulls U23 will face off on July 20th and July 21st for the right to represent the Eastern Conference in the PDL National Championships.

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-third season, Reading United's



Official Premier Development League Affiliate of the Philadelphia Union





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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.



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