

STL City 2 Soccer: Dolling Scores A Pair, City 2 Downs Timbers 2, 3-1

by Nathan Tucker
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EDWARDSVILLE - Coming off of a two-week break, St. Louis City 2 returned to action at their home away from home on Sunday. Their first MLS NEXT Pro match at Ralph Korte Stadium in Edwardsville saw City 2 relatively cruise to a 3-1 win over Portland Timbers 2.

For those who might not be aware, St. Louis City 2 is the developmental team for St. Louis City SC, which starts play in Major League Soccer next season. City 2 plays in MLS NEXT Pro, a new league for MLS-affiliated developmental programs.

“We have our own objective, we’re using MLS NEXT Pro as our first opportunity to put our pro team together (for MLS).” STL City 2 Head Coach John Hackworth said in his pre-match press conference on Friday. “The league as a whole has been interesting because we’ve had a lot of first-team players brought to St. Louis to play against us. That’s great, it’s made for some tough moments for our young and more inexperienced guys.”

City 2 came off a two-week break following their last match, a 2-1 defeat to Whitecaps FC 2 at Hermann Stadium on the campus of Saint Louis University. The home team led 1-0 at halftime from a Josh Dolling header, but two late Whitecaps goals flipped the scoreline and the visitors took all three points back to Vancouver.

“We’ve tried to reflect,” said Hackworth on their short break. “In these periods of the season where you have this off-week, it’s a really valuable time to look back at what you thought you did really well, and focus on the things you have to improve. That’s what we’ve tried to emphasize.”

A crowd of over a thousand greeted STL City 2 at their Metro East home, led by the vociferous St. Louligans, who’ve supported numerous soccer teams in the area since their founding more than a decade ago. The home crowd didn’t have to wait long for a goal, as striker Vitor Dias put City 2 ahead in just the second minute.

“Obviously playing at SLU we’re used to grass, and here it’s turf, that’s one thing,” Hackworth noted following the match. “We have our supporters right behind the bench here, it’s very loud, I have to yell a bit more to get my voice heard. Both (SLU and SIUE) have been fantastic, and both universities have been great partners with us. You can tell it brings a “12th man” for us, and it’s just the start of what we can do here with the community and the fanbase’s support.”

Dias’s opening goal was the only one of the first half, as both teams spent the remainder of the first 45 minutes exchanging half-chances. Just four minutes into the second half City 2 would add another, as Josh Dolling poked home a loose ball in Portland’s six-yard box. Dolling wasn’t finished there, as he finished a fast and flowing STL City 2 move with a curled effort around Timbers 2 goaltender Noah Lawrence.

Portland added a consolation goal in the 74th minute of the contest. Late goals have been a problem for City 2, losing their last home game two weeks ago on two late goals by Whitecaps 2. They only allowed the one Sunday, and largely cruised to a 3-1 victory.

The win sees STL City 2 improve to 5-2-0 on the young season and move up to fourth place in the Western Conference of MLS NEXT Pro. Their next league match is on

Sunday, May 29, back across the river in St. Louis at Hermann Stadium, welcoming San Jose Earthquakes II. City 2's next match in Edwardsville is the following Saturday, June 4th, against Houston Dynamo 2.