

“Goosebumps” For CITY Players, St. Louis Celebrates First MLS Home Game

by Nathan Tucker

March 5 2023 10:47 AM



ST. LOUIS - Following the dramatics of St. Louis CITY SC's first MLS victory, there was an unspoken pressure to perform well at home and get a result in the first MLS match at CITYPARK. Saturday night's 3-1 win over Charlotte FC saw CITY live up to that pressure and claim three points in the first home match in the club's fledgling history.

It admittedly wasn't a dream start for St. Louis CITY, 25 minutes into the match, Charlotte FC striker Enzo Copetti found space behind the CITY backline and slotted his header into the side netting. St. Louis captain and goalkeeper Roman Burki could do nothing but watch.

"Some moments to fix for sure," St. Louis CITY SC head coach Bradley Carnell said following the match. "On turnovers, I'd like us to be a little more aggressive against the ball, but credit to the boys. Our recovery runs, our willingness to get back in the game and get in our shape, then we press again and we had many great moments."

Despite Charlotte's early goal, it was CITY who had the most chances in the first half. Five minutes in, Klauss found the ball in the box and lifted his shot well over the goal, but the effort drew rousing applause from the 22,423 in attendance, cheering Klauss's effort on the play.

"Wave after wave, we were relentless," Carnell said. "I guess the question is, can we be a bit more clinical? Can we be a little more penetrating in the final third? I think there's a lot of things to look at."

When St. Louis CITY trailed in the first half, the fans remained vocal. The drum corps from the supporters' end kept drumming, the fans kept chanting, willing their team back into the game. Minutes before the halftime break, CITY equalized, but in an unexpected way.

A dangerous cross was whipped into the box, and Klauss rose to meet it. He was beaten to the cross by Charlotte FC defender Bill Tuiloma, but Tuiloma's header went backward, right over the helpless Charlotte goalkeeper Pablo Sisniega and into the back of the net. CITY's first goal in CITYPARK was not entirely theirs to claim.

"The first goal passed right over me," said Klauss to the media following the match. "I was just trying to fight the defender for space, and forced them into a mistake."

CITY wasn't done there. Another attack and another cross into the box bounced off the outstretched arm of Charlotte forward Karol Swiderski. Eduard Loewen stepped up to the penalty spot, took a breath, and rifled his penalty into the top corner of the goal to give the hosts the lead heading into halftime.

"(Charlotte players) tried provoking me before the (penalty) kick," said Loewen postmatch. "I was just trying to push them away. It's alright in the end, I scored, so it doesn't matter."

Of all of the praise CITY staff and players heaped upon the sell-out crowd in attendance at CITYPARK and all those outside who were watching along, Eduard Loewen was the most struck by the passion St. Louis' soccer fans showed Saturday night in Downtown West.

“I had goosebumps when I walked out,” Loewen said. “The city will be celebrating this game not just tonight but for a few days to come. I’ve never played in a stadium with so much euphoria and so much excitement. I’ve never felt anything like that. When we scored, it was so special, you could see that everyone was waiting for this moment for some time.”

CITY would add a third goal in the second half in a familiar fashion. For the second time in two weeks of St. Louis CITY SC soccer history, a defender on the opposing team mistakenly passed it to a CITY player. This time it was Klauss, who made no mistake in lobbing the Charlotte keeper from the edge of the box. The score at 3-1 with less than 20 minutes remaining, CITYPARK turned into one giant party.

“Tonight was not about the result,” head coach Bradley Carnell mentioned following the win. “Tonight was about the celebration of the city and what it means to people to bring soccer to this town. We want to embrace the mindset of St. Louis, we want to embrace the culture of the community, right? Lutz (Pfannenstiel, St. Louis CITY SC Sporting Director) is here for a reason. I think I’m here for a reason. The players have bought into it. The players know that when we play this way, we can really compete on the day.”

“Last week was emotional, this week was the celebration.” Carnell continued. “Expectations were one way, now those expectations are totally opposite. We’ll reflect tonight, and then we have to get ready for a tough game next week at Portland.”

The undefeated St. Louis CITY SC head to Portland next week to face a tough Timbers team. Expectations are rising, but a win in Portland would send alarm bells throughout MLS that this expansion CITY side is the real deal from day one.

[Bradley Piros also contributed to this story.](#)