

“Not Superhuman After All” - St. Louis CITY SC Handed First MLS Loss By Minnesota United

by Nathan Tucker
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ST. LOUIS - To start an MLS season with five wins and no losses put the expansion St. Louis CITY SC into rarified air. To start with six proved to be a bridge too far, and CITY fell to Minnesota United at home Saturday night by a 1-0 scoreline.

It's a number of not-so-great firsts for the fledgling CITY. Their first MLS loss, their first match where they were held goalless, and their first loss at home at CITYPARK among them.

"Well, we're not superhuman after all," St. Louis CITY head coach Bradley Carnell said following the match. "Nothing changes our desire as a team to get better. We lose, it is what it is, and we go again next week with the score starting at 0-0."

The first half had few chances either way, the first goalless half in CITY's MLS existence. CITY's closest chance of the half was a header from Eduard Löwen, which looped over Minnesota United goalkeeper Dayne St. Clair, but bounced off the crossbar and behind for a goal kick.

St. Louis CITY seemed confident heading into the halftime break despite not scoring a goal. They controlled the lion's share of possession with 64% in the half and had a good number of shots that were just lacking the quality to find the back of the net.

"We had some shots outside the box," said CITY midfielder Eduard Löwen in his postgame media availability. "We had some dangerous crosses, dangerous headers, we were unlucky today, but we need to be more clinical."

One might think to credit Minnesota United's defensive style for CITY's lack of goals on Saturday night, but Löwen believed it to be a lack of a finishing touch from the home team.

"I wouldn't say Minnesota defended so well," Löwen continued. "We had a lot of chances, they just sit very low. We still had the chances to score. You could say it 'wasn't our day' but we just weren't clinical enough. We have to hold ourselves accountable and see what we can do better."

The only goal in the match came from a penalty kick awarded to Minnesota United in the 76th minute of the contest. On the play, chaos around Roman Bürki's six-yard box ended up with CITY defender Kyle Hiebert sliding into his own teammate, Jake Nerwinski, who made contact with a Minnesota United attacker in the box, who went down hard and drew the penalty call from referee Jon Freeman.

"We don't need to worry about the referees in games," said St. Louis CITY Sporting Director Lutz Pfannenstiel after the game. "There were enough moments for us to score and keep the referees out of it. We played our game, we were kind of beaten by our own game."

Luis Amarilla made no mistake from the penalty spot, coolly slotting his effort into the center of the goal while Roman Bürki made a move to his right. CITY had 15 minutes and stoppage time to try to find an equalizer.



The best chance to level the score fell to the feet of substitute striker Sam Adeniran, who made himself some space at the edge of the Minnesota six-yard box in front of goal, but hoofed his shot over the bar. It was likely CITY's best chance all match, and it had come in second-half stoppage time.

“Sam Adeniran has had real success at the USL (United Soccer League Championship, the second tier of US Soccer) level,” said Bradley Carnell on his young striker. “We thought we could be real threatening with two real strikers up top. It almost paid off for us. I’m bummed for Sam, he deserved a goal there.”

As the full-time whistle blew, some supporters booed the referee who they feel cost them the match, but many stayed to applaud St. Louis CITY's efforts so far this season. They may have lost, but this is still the best start any new MLS club has ever had, and they still lead the MLS Supporters Shield race, and still sit atop the MLS Western Conference, two points ahead of next week's opponent, Seattle Sounders.

“Nobody expected anything from us,” quipped Eduard Löwen postgame. “Now people talk about us like we’re the luckiest team in the league like we haven’t scored 15 goals. I’m sure some will be happy about our loss, but Tuesday we focus on Seattle.”

Like Löwen says, CITY will regroup this week before a tough test against a strong Seattle Sounders squad on the road at Lumen Field in Seattle.

“Every streak ends someday,” Lutz Pfannenstiel noted. “We’ll lose a few more games. It’s all about how we bounce back, it’s about our reaction. You get beaten once in a while, but winning five and losing one, I think we can still be proud of that.”