

# City Gets Back To Winning Ways, Shuts Out NYCFC 2-0

by Nathan Tucker, Sports Reporter  
March 3 2024 12:13 PM



ST. LOUIS - This past week, following a disappointing defeat and exit from the Concacaf Champions Cup, head coach Bradley Carnell said St. Louis City SC was “looking forward” to their match Saturday night against NYCFC, instead of dwelling on a not-too-great start to the season.

What City needed Saturday night was to turn the page from their sluggish Tuesday evening in Houston, and get back to their “principles” as Carnell so often mentions. They did exactly that, shutting out their visitors from the Big Apple 2-0.

“We came out today to send a message,” Carnell said after the game. “To show that we were a little bit angry with ourselves in our past performance, and to set things straight. I've seen the intentions in training. I've seen the intentions and the messaging within the locker rooms. I thought over the 90 minutes we dominated a very, very good team here at CITY PARK, and yeah it was a good feeling to get back to winning ways.”

The City that showed up for the first half looked much more like the City of old, a team using their counter-attack to create scoring chances. In less than 10 minutes, Celio Pompeu rattled a goalpost with a shot from just outside the box, a better chance than City had all night last Tuesday.

Aziel Jackson joined Celio Pompeu in striking the post in the first half, as City continued to get good looks at NYCFC's goal. In the 35th minute, their repeated attacks paid dividends.

Celio Pompeu took the ball on the left wing, took on a bevy of NYC defenders, leaving a number of black shirts in his wake, and smashed a shot beyond NYCFC goalkeeper Matt Freese's extended right arm.

“I think Célio, with certain opponents, he comes to life,” said Carnell of his left winger. “You can see the attitude he plays with, the fire in his belly. We need characters on the team that bring that fire. Not just technical ability, not just pressing, we need someone, especially on that front line, who has a bit of fire in their belly.”

The visitors looked to strike back just minutes later when Kevin O'Toole chipped a pass into the City box, and Hannes Wolf leaped to steer the shot beyond Roman Burki. Burki was quick to get right in Wolf's kitchen by the time the ball came in and stonewalled Wolf from point-blank range.

Sam Adeniran, who started at striker Saturday, was a mere foot from extending City's lead before the half, but his shot went just to the right of the New York City goal.

Up a goal at half, City looked a lot more like last year's team that stormed their way to the top spot in the MLS Western Conference than the team that bowed out of the Concacaf Champions Cup last Tuesday.

City continued to look the better team into the second half, and started to dictate play more and more. Looking to put their foot on the gas even more, Carnell brought on Joao Klauss to be a second striker alongside Adeniran.

With both Adeniran and Klauss asking questions of the NYC back line, City looked more and more threatening, chasing a second goal. In the 72nd minute, they got that goal.

It was the kind of breakout play that Carnell dreamt of when building his City team. Celio Pompeu intercepted a long NYCFC ball in the City half, chesting the ball down to Eduard Lowen. Pompeu then made a darting run up the left wing, and Lowen found Pompeu in stride running at the NYC defense.

Pompeu played a pass right into the path of Adeniran, rushing toward the NYCFC box. Adeniran had Klauss making a run in space in the middle, but chose to hammer a shot with his left foot that blew right by Matt Freese in the NYC goal.

“I think there were a couple of times where I was in that position before where I didn't take a shot,” said Adeniran, talking about his second-half goal. “I saw that the goalkeeper was off his line a little bit and wasn't toward his post. So, I thought I had an angle there.”

“I'm just happy that it went in,” laughed Adeniran. “I know Klauss would have been on top of me if it didn't go in.”

A second for City, a second goal involvement for Pompeu, and some clinical striker play from Adeniran, who is making sure City fans don't miss Niko Gioacchini too much.

“I'm just happy that we got the win and that the team is moving forward, especially after the game that we had on Tuesday,” said Adeniran. “Obviously as a striker, it's important to score goals, but it's more important to win as a team.”

With the game in the bag at this point, frustrations started boiling over for the losing visitors. An argument-turned-shoving match saw NYCFC defender James Sands sent off with just about 10 minutes of normal time to play, but that was the last meaningful action for NYC.

The final whistle blew, and City had both their first win and first shutout of the 2024 MLS season. It was a performance that the team will want to replicate next weekend when they play their first away match on the MLS calendar at Austin FC.

“Today was clinical. Today was really tight,” said Carnell. “It was really good that we were so connected, but it starts from the front, and I think the guys put in a hell of a shift up front just to force those turnovers and to be relentless in the press and to come back in the game and to defend with 10 players. Credit to everyone. It was a complete performance.”

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