

Aurora United falls in League 1 season opener



By Jake Courtepatte

A ten-minute lapse in the second half was enough to sink Aurora United FC in the opening match of their second League 1 Ontario season on Saturday.

Hosting the Ottawa South United Force, a newcomer to the semi-pro league, at St. Maximilian Kolbe CHS field, Aurora was forced to contend with an early deficit when Ottawa converted on a corner kick in the eighth minute.

Christopher Jacovou retaliated with the home side's first of the year in the final minute before half, though Ottawa added two more at the 47th and 57th minute to earn a 3 ? 1 victory.

"I think we went in at half-time with high spirits," said Aurora head coach Derek O'Keeffe. "We had a good and well-deserved equalizer and we talked at the half about maintaining that momentum and concentration. Unfortunately, we didn't.

"There were lapses of concentration that allowed them to get a second one, and with the wind as it was the second one was a tough one, especially at the start of the second half. The boys had good spirits, they tried to come back but unfortunately that second goal killed us.?"

The third goal came as a result of a questionable penalty call inside the box.

?After that we just found it hard to get on the ball, get our passes together and lacked a bit of quality in the attacking third."

The reins have been passed to O'Keeffe this year from Jimmy Brennan, who coached the team in its inaugural 2016 season. The former Toronto FC and Team Canada player has decided to focus solely on his role as the squad's executive director.

"Last season was our first season in the league, it was great start after building the team from scratch in 2016," said Brennan. "We've now got our foundation in place and been able to add to that with some great recruits and a talented new coach in Derek O'Keeffe." O'Keeffe, who owns a personal training business in Toronto, enters the position with a vast background in coaching North American soccer, including a stint with the MLS' New York Red Bulls.

He also holds a Bachelor's Degree in Sports Coaching and Development.

Aurora will be looking to improve on their four win, fifteen loss, and three draw initial season with the added challenge of the loss of their star scorer, striker Simon Adjei. Adjei, who scored at a goal-per-game pace in 2016, left the semi-pro league at the end of last season to pursue further opportunities.

However, O'Keeffe sees potential in his up-and-coming young squad.

"We have 21-year-old Joey Tituana who is a central midfielder from Toronto that just recently won a provincial and national championship with the Humber Hawks," said O'Keeffe. ?While 18-year-old Dylan Rennie, a forward from Collingwood, will be beginning an athletics scholarship with the Algoma Thunderbirds in Sault Ste. Marie in the fall. Rennie has been playing League1 since he was 16 years of age and is a great prospect. His next step is hopefully going to the pro level."

The men continue their campaign on Saturday when they host the North Toronto Nitros (1-0-0) at St. Max. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m.

The women's side open their sophomore season prior to the men's game against the Unionville Milliken SC, with a kickoff of 4 p.m. at St. Max Kolbe.

For more information, visit www.league1ontario.com.