

Raimondo leads Aurora United to blowout win



By Jake Courtepatte

Aurora United FC's stars were shining brightly last week in a 6-1 victory over Darby FC.

Canada Under-17 player Lauren Raimondo scored a hat trick in the home match at Sheppard's Bush, while Under-20 star Sarah Stratagakis added a single.

A scoreless first half left both sides looking for answers, before Raimondo opened the scoring in the 55th minute.

"The first half was a little bit frustrating for us," said Aurora head coach Ramin Mohammadi. "It was a young team we faced, well coached and organized, so we had to change a little bit of the tactical in the second half."

Stratigakis struck in the 64th minute, followed shortly by Raimondo, who completed her hat trick late in the match. Singles were also added by Samantha Cawkell and Nicole Kozlova.

"I think the half-time talk worked, they implemented the changes and executed the game plan. In the end we got the result we want," said Mohammadi.

"As usual, the Canada program players worked very hard, and they helped the others around them to play too. There is a good chemistry between the players and especially at the highest women's level in Canada and with some new players in the system I think they've helped build a great team."

Darby head coach Mirco Schroff said he was aware of the international talent his team was up against.

"Obviously with the overall quality of players in Aurora, they have internationals Lauren Raimondo and Sarah Stratagakis of course, it is very tough to come back after going down a couple of goals."

Despite only suiting up for four games this season, the hat trick more than doubled her production to five goals. The effort places her third on the team in points, only behind regulars Stratagakis and Meghan Reynolds.

"I think today's game was a real team effort," she said. "We went in at half-time and we knew that we were going to put in a few goals in the second half, but we just needed to work together as we were getting the chances but it was about the finish."

"I'm very proud, it was such an amazing game today. I'm happy with the goals I got, but I couldn't have done it without my teammates around me. There were some beautiful assists and all around it was just a wonderful game."

The win is just the latest success for a team making a late run at improving their record, the third in a row with just one game left on the regular season schedule. Aurora has outscored their opponents 19-4 during the streak.

The 5-7-3 women's side close out their season next Friday, visiting Darlington for a rematch with Darby FC. A win could move the first-year team to as high as fifth place in the nine-team League 1 Ontario.

The Aurora United men are on a two-week break, poor timing for a team on a three-game hot streak. They have a chance to improve their unbeaten streak to four games on Sunday, when they visit the 2-13-3 Toronto Skillz FC.