

## Key takeaways from York9 FC's short campaign

You have to feel for York9 FC. Analysis written before the Island Games' tournament suggested the team's offseason acquisitions had cemented the club as one of the favourites to win it all.

In hindsight, their performances were good. Good, but not great, and that was the difference.

Three ties to begin the tournament against Atletico Ottawa, Pacific FC and Valour FC was insidious and it helped other clubs to remain in the mix.

Sure, York9 earned a dramatic victory in the 905 Derby the next game against Forge FC, but a costly tie against the HFX Wanderers definitely applied some pressure. The Nine Stripes got the win against FC Edmonton, before bowing out against Cavalry FC 1-0 in the deciding match and HFX's win in their final match secured York 9 a plane ticket home.

It was disheartening. Demoralizing. Place any adjective here to describe it. The boys only suffered one loss throughout the competition and that was enough to kiss a shot at the title goodbye. It's the cruelty of soccer. Even if you feel things are going well, they are not always as they seem.

What does ?seem to be? is a bright future for next year and time is in their favour. It's more time to prepare for the next season; however that will look.

For now, here are some takeaways from the club's performance in the Island Games.

### **Big Time Defence**

Let's begin with the positive. York9 FC tied for first with the least amount of goals conceded along with Cavalry FC and HFX Wanderers with seven.

Luca Gasparotto, Roger Thompson, Morey Doner, Diyaeddine Abzi and Fugo Segawa (when called upon) did an excellent job holding down the back-line.

The 2019 Ironman, Gasparotto, played every minute of the tournament as well as Doner and Thompson.

Gasparotto finished with a team high 14 interceptions and tied for fifth most in the league (as of this past Monday) followed by Thompson with 13 and Doner with 12.

This triple threat held down the back end for York9 FC consistently. Gasparotto led the team with 43 clearances as well, good for second-most in the competition.

These statistics may change as there are four teams still currently standing in the Island Games.

Y9 did not concede a goal from outside of the area in open play throughout the entire competition as well.

### **Finishing**

Out of their eight goals, York9 scored two goals from free play. The rest came from a set-piece.

Free-kick genius Manny Aparicio ripped in a few glorious goals from the dead ball and Joseph Di Chiara capitalized from the penalty spot.

This was ultimately York9 FC's biggest drawback. The club couldn't score in free play. They did not score a free play goal in the final four matches of the season.

The only two free-play goals came from Lowell Wright on match-day one against Atletico Ottawa and Alvaro Rivero on match-day two against Pacific FC.

### **Conceding Last Minute**

The outcome could have been very different.

Instead of amassing two victories in seven matches, Y9 could have easily obtained four victories in total and we would be having a very different conversation.

A last-minute goal against Pacific FC in stoppage time and one off of a free kick from Omar Kreim against HFX Wanderers are surely two talking points looking back.

Composure was key in the dying moments and Y9 showed flashes of losing their cool ? and not only conceding the goal, but also conceding momentum and possession when it mattered most.

### **Overall Rating (B+)**

The club performed very well in this competition overall. Y9 was an injury-ridden squad at times with the loss of Michael Petrasso, Christopher Manella and goalkeeper Nathan Ingham for multiple matches.

The youngsters, Lowell Wright, Ijah Halley and Max Ferrari made an instant impact for the team coming off of the bench. These players are a must-watch next season.

But with so many signings and little time to prepare, now is the time to make further preparations and really get Alvaro Rivero and Gabriel Vasconcelos accustomed to the system and learn how others play.

It was also an excellent tournament for Joseph Di Chiara, who led the club with three goals scored.

**By Robert Belardi**