

RailHawks fall in Puerto Rico, out of second place

BAYAMÓN, PUERTO RICO – There were no championships on the line Tuesday night, but it was the Puerto Rico defense that caused the RailHawks a 2-0 defeat at Juan Ramón Loubriel Stadium.

Puerto Rico defenders Cristian Arrieta and John Krause scored the two goals, and goalkeeper Bill Gaudette did his part to shut out the RailHawks and send them to their second straight loss. Carolina also lost its grip on second place in the USL-1 table. With three points from Tuesday's match, Puerto Rico (50 points) overtook the RailHawks (49), who've been entrenched in second for the last three weeks.

"At the start of the season, our goal was to finish in the top three," said Carolina coach Martin Rennie. "I think our expectations are higher now, so it's really hard any time we lose. But our goal was to finish in the top three. Ultimately, whether it's a good season or a great one will depend on what we do from now."

Rennie observed the match from the stands as he was serving his one-match suspension following his ejection from last week's match in Montreal. Assistant coach Brian Irvine handled the in-game management.

The match was even throughout and a scoreless draw seemed a fair and inevitable conclusion after the teams played each other so closely. But the match turned against the RailHawks (14-7-7) in the 75th minute when the Islanders (14-5-8) were awarded a penalty kick. Carolina goalkeeper Caleb Patterson charged off his line to challenge for a ball, but he was called for a foul when he slid after it. Arrieta stepped to the spot and placed the ball into the left side of the goal, while Patterson dove right.

The Islanders put the game away six minutes later, when Krause headed in Jonny Steele's corner kick at the back post.

Carolina spent much of the night on the ball and attacking, but for the second straight match, that didn't translate into any goals.

"We need to improve on our finishing," Rennie said. "The last two games we have had a lot of chances, a lot of the ball, so there's a key thing we have to improve on. Early on, we were passing a bit better than we are now. Next game, we've got to focus on that and on playing at a good tempo and a good pace."

In the 28th minute, Puerto Rico gave away the ball just outside its area and Gavin Glington broke in on goal, but Gaudette came out and cleared the ball away.

In first-half stoppage time, Daniel Paladini had a look from just more than 20 yards, but Gaudette dove to make the save.

In the 62nd minute, Luke Kreamalmeyer created a shot for himself at the near post, but Gaudette went down and turned him away.

In the 68th minute, five minutes after stepping on the field, Andriy Budnyy flung a low shot on goal, but again, Gaudette was there to keep it out of the net.

While the match's complexion changed on a Puerto Rico PK, Carolina felt it deserved one nearly 20 minutes earlier. In the 58th minute, Kreamalmeyer beat his defender out wide and cut toward goal from the left flank. As he tried to separate from his man, he was tackled from behind. Not getting that call hurt, and it took on added significance when just more than 15 minutes later, the Islanders received a PK one and took control of the match.

With Tuesday's defeat, the RailHawks have lost all four times they've gone to Puerto Rico, and they fell to 0-6-1 all-time against the Islanders.

The RailHawks can reclaim second place — and their first-ever win over the Islanders — later this week. The teams will meet for the third and final team of the season on Saturday at 7 p.m. at WakeMed Soccer Park.

Said Rennie, "We've just got to dust ourselves off and move forward."

SCORING SUMMARY

PR: Cristian Arrieta, 74th

PR: John Krause (Jonny Steele), 80th

LINEUPS

CAR: GK Caleb Patterson, D John Gilkerson, D Jeremy Tolleson, D Mark Schulte, D Devon McKenney (Gregory Richardson, 78th), M Brad Rusin, M Daniel Paladini (Brian Plotkin, 78th), M Matt Watson (Sallieu Bundu, 85th), M Luke Kreamalmeyer, F John Cunliffe, F Gavin Glington (Andriy Budnyy, 62nd)

PR: GK Bill Gaudette, D Cristian Arrieta (Kyle Veris, 88th), D Scott Jones, D John Krause, D Marco Velez, M James Marcelin, M Sandy Gbandi (Dan Gargan, 36th), M Jonny Steele, M Andres Cabrero (Josh Hansen, 69th), F Sean Fraser (Fabrice Noel, 66th), F Nicholas Addlery

CAUTIONS

PR: Jonny

Steele, 60th; Alexis Rivera, 85th

CAR: John Cunliffe, 57th; Brad Rusin, 70th; Devon
McKenney, 73rd

EJECTIONS

CAR: Kupono
Low, 86th