

Big Win

86ers get a little help in first A-League victory

By **CHRIS SIMNETT**

Free Press staff writer

The Vancouver 86ers are having so much trouble finishing off their chances in this young American Professional Soccer League season, the Atlanta Ruckus decided to do something about it.

Winless in their first four games, the 86ers had only scored one goal during that span. That didn't change on Sunday at Massey Place Stadium when the Ruckus scored the only goal in the 86ers 1-0 victory.

Sounds strange? It was. Ruckus goalkeeper Mun Young Yi came out of his goal while defender Richard Richmond thought he had stayed in. Richmond calmly nodded the ball past the scrambling keeper for the only goal of the match.

Scored 17 minutes into the first half, the goal was the culmination of continuous Vancouver pressure in the Atlanta end.

The fact that his team didn't finish it themselves wasn't all that important to player/coach Carl Valentine.

"It was an own goal but I think it was the kind of goal we needed," says Valentine, his Manchester, England accent diluted by more than 15 years of playing soccer in Canada. "We played really well against Colorado (1-0 loss on Friday night) and we created some chances. We didn't capitalize on our chances and it cost us a game and it almost happened today."

Dominic Mobilio is the biggest name the 86ers have and is expected to score more than the one goal he has so far this season. While Mobilio, who has 20 caps for Canada in international play, had his chances on the Massey Place

pitch, nothing seemed to work for him.

"It's definitely frustrating," says the 27-year-old midfielder/forward. "I know four or five years ago my head would be down about this. I thought we played well. The last two games we played well. We're creating a lot of chances, now, they just have to start going in. You need to have a good game to get a good bounce. It's just a matter of time."

While the 86ers got the one good bounce they needed off Richmond's noggin, the rest of the game was filled with bad bounces, and exciting, rough, scramble play.

The 2,178 fans that braved a national-anthem hailstorm at Massey Place, saw the referee hand out four yellow cards, three to the Ruckus, for unusually rough play. There was even a little post-game dust up as tempers flared when both teams were headed to their dressing rooms.

"It was an emotional game," says Mobilio. "It was our first win of the season. It's like we just won the cup. We got the monkey off our back."

The win vaults the 86ers into a fourth-place tie with the Ruckus in the A-League standings. Both teams have one win in five games and Ruckus coach Charlie Morgan says Sunday's game was a huge one for his team.

"When you break it all down, Vancouver was the better team today," says Morgan in his slow southern drawl. "They created more chances than we did. Anytime you're looking at your first win, you're going to be pumped up to play."

Morgan says his team has to work harder offensively and create more chances if they hope to repeat last season's second-place finish.



Vancouver 86ers keeper Paul Dolan punches the ball away from his goal and Atlanta Ruckus midfielder Thomas Elliot during the 86ers' 1-0 win in Prince George Sunday afternoon. JOHN MCKENZIE/FREE PRESS

Go-Karts go

The Northern Interior Karting Association is hosting a race meet this weekend at the Prince George race track, next to the PGARA Speedway. Practice starts at 10:30 a.m. Saturday while racing begins at 9:30 a.m. Sunday. Call Nan at 563-2404 for info.

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First and last for 86ers?

The 86ers might not be back. Player/coach Carl Valentine says while the fans were "fantastic", he was disappointed in the low turnout. He says the team needed at least 3,000 fans to consider coming back for more next season. Only 2,178 fans were on hand at Massey Place Stadium for the game.

Ruckus coach Charlie Morgan and Valentine were both happy with the crowd. Though small in numbers, the Prince George soccer fans were as vociferous as any in the A-League. "As far as the fans were concerned, it was a great atmosphere," says Morgan. "They looked like they were having a great time."

While the 86ers won the game and the first Air BC Cup, it could be the last pro soccer Prince George sees for awhile.

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