

Kevin Molino Scores Hat-Trick in Lions' Win over Eagles at ESPN Wide World of Sports

Orlando City defeats Charlotte Eagles 3-1 to extend unbeaten streak this season

Lake Buena Vista, Fla – Propelled by a hat-trick from Kevin Molino, Orlando City SC (8-0-3, 27 points) defeated the Charlotte Eagles 3-1 on Wednesday night at ESPN Wide World of Sports. The hat-trick moves Molino into first place on the USL PRO scoring charts, as Orlando City extends its unbeaten streak to start the season.

"Some of our attacking play was outstanding tonight," said Head Coach Adrian Heath after the 3-1 win. "But I'm a little bit concerned because I thought that we gave a few too many chances to the opposition."

Tonight's match marked the first meeting between both sides since the thrilling 2013 USL PRO Championship match last September that saw the Lions defeat the Eagles 7-4 in front of a record crowd.

Charlotte came close to pulling off an upset in the 2013 final and looked to do the same in Wednesday's match, as Orlando City, who currently sits in first place in USL PRO, has yet to lose a game this season.

However, Orlando looked dangerous in the early stages of the first half, particularly from set-pieces, and seemed destined to secure a quick goal. In the 11th minute, on City's third consecutive corner kick, the ball bounced around the box before being cleared out to Defender Bryan Burke, who fired a powerful effort that forced Eagles 'keeper Brock Duckworth to parry the ball in Kevin Molino's path.

The Trinidadian international, who leads the teams in goals and points, made no mistake finishing from 10 yards away for his sixth goal of the season, putting him in first place for goals scored in USL PRO.

Molino has been playing arguably his best football since arriving to Orlando and would add a second for Orlando in the 31st minute. The club's first MLS signing pounced on a poor clearance from the Eagles inside the box and smacked home his seventh goal of the 2014 campaign.

"Kevin has always been an incredible footballer since he's come to Orlando," added Heath "But we've been pushing for him to take that next step and he's managed to do that this year."

Aside from a few half-chances, Charlotte struggled to gain any momentum in the first half as the Lions seemed to be clicking on all cylinders. The Eagles' best opportunity to find the back of the net came in the 18th minute when Midfielder Drew Yates created space for himself and fired a cracking shot from close range.

Unfortunately for Charlotte, the midfielder's effort went directly to Gallardo, who was able to push it wide.

The second half was similar to the first 45 as the Orlando attacking players proved to cause ample issues for the Eagles' backline.

City's attacking midfielders and full-backs were continuously finding space in behind, and as a result, created multiple

opportunities that put Duckworth and the Charlotte defense under pressure.

In the 61st minute, Adama Mbengue came close to providing Corey Hertzog with his first league goal for City. The Senegalese, who was a constant threat all night long, combined nicely with

Alvarez for a one-two before playing a probing ball across the six for Hertzog who placed his effort just wide of the target. "I thought that Adama was fantastic tonight," Heath continued. "If Kevin hadn't scored three goals, he would've had my vote for Man of the Match." Nevertheless, Molino was able to maintain his excellent form throughout the match and scored his first-ever hat-trick for Orlando City just 15 minutes later. After a poor giveaway from

Charlotte in its defensive third, Mikey Lopez kick-started a counter, which saw City have the advantage in numbers, and played a precise ball to Molino on the back post.

Molino caught Lopez's cross cleanly on the half-volley, placing home his first-ever professional hat-trick.

Charlotte secured a consolation goal in the 80th minute when substitute Giuseppe Gentile was able to capitalize on a mistake made by Tommy Redding. The 17 year-old center-half played flawless up until that point but showed signs of being a youngster on that particular play.

With the win secured, Orlando City extends its unbeaten streak in league play to 11 consecutive games. The Lions' record for most games in a row without a loss occurred in 2012 when the team went 14 games straight without losing.

City's next match will take place on Friday, May 23, against AS Roma of the Italian Serie A at ESPN Wide World of Sports. Kick-off is set for 7:30 p.m. EST.

The Lions will then take on the Tampa Bay Rowdies in the third round of the U.S. Open Cup on May 28 before returning back to league play for a match against the Charleston Battery at ESPN Wide World of Sports.

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