



Fraser Valley Soccer League



January 30, 2019

From the Media Desk of the Fraser Valley Soccer League...

Well it is getting down to the brass tacks in the Umbro Premier League as there are just four matches left after this weekend and how the table will look come the end of February is still anyone's guess. The top five are officially set, however attention now turns to finishing in the top three and booking a guaranteed spot in the Provincial Cup. At the bottom, the battle is on to avoid ending the season in the bottom two places. Of course, there is still the small matter of deciding who will be lifting the UPL title to sort out as well! With six points separating the top five we are surely in for a photo finish.

Here's a recap of all the action:

Langley United 1-4 Port Moody Gunners – Friday 8:30pm; Yorkson Turf

This match was certainly the standout fixture on the UPL calendar this weekend with the two sides locked in a tie for second place coming into this one, a single point off the top. The opening half certainly resembled a match between two evenly matched teams who knew there was plenty at stake, as there was very little room for either side to operate. The Gunners might have been shading the opening exchanges, but it was the home side who found the breakthrough when **Josh Brown** was first to pounce on a scramble created by a long throw. Port Moody felt they should have dealt with that one better, but they wasted little time ruing their mistake and, instead, ensured that Langley's lead was short lived. Gunner's striker **Cole Almond** got the visitors on the board, only needing half a chance to restore parity prior to halftime. After the interval it was a case cometh the hour, cometh the man with Port Moody's leading scorer **Graeme Meers** taking over the game. The match became rather one sided and Meers helped himself to a hattrick and carried his Tri-Cities teammates to a comfortable win. In spite of conceding four goals, Langley keeper **Andrew Hicks** had a standout performance, and actually played a role in creating his team's goal with a ranging ball downfield which lead to the all important throw-in. Thanks to results elsewhere, Port Moody climbed back atop the UPL table, but they will hardly have time to enjoy the view with a titanic showdown against defending champions Coastal up next.

Surrey United Firefighters 1-1 Coastal FC – Friday 8:45pm; Cloverdale Turf #2

After dropping a pair of point last week when Chilliwack found a very late equalizer, Surrey United were looking to make a statement against leaders Coastal and stay very much relevant in the title race. Firefighters certainly started brightly as they were rewarded just five or so minutes into this one when **Raq Amijee** hammered home from close range after being slipped in following some neat build up play. Surrey kept the pressure mounting with **Josh Miles** and **Suki Binning** combining well to cause Coastal problems. However, their long injury list, along with an energized Coastal group, seemed to catch up with United in the second half as the visitors began to take the game over. Coastal kept coming all half and were finally rewarded with a late equalizer. Surrey defender **Andrew Reed** had done a masterful job keeping Coastal's offensive juggernaut, **Jake Starheim**, in check all game, but Starheim was able to finally wriggle free and get a second ball from a corner kick back into the box for **Cam Parkes** to tap in from close range. While the late comeback will certainly be somewhat of a moral victory, the dropped points see Coastal fall out of first place, making their next game against Port Moody an almost "must win" encounter. For Surrey, assistant manager Dave Hleucka summed it by noting that "the tie is a good point considering the opponent," however he conceded that "back to back weeks giving up the lead in the final ten really stings." Indeed, losing more points this week leaves United six points back of first with only four games to play, meaning it might take some divine intervention to win the UPL title now.



Fraser Valley Soccer League



Burnaby Firefighters 0-1 Abbotsford United – Saturday 6:15pm; Trasolini Turf

Things are tightening up all over the UPL as the teams can clearly see the value of each and every point that is available to play for, regardless of where they sit in the table. Despite being well outside of UPL Championship or Provincial Cup contention, Burnaby are fighting to stay out of the bottom two which would mean they could rest easy knowing there is no chance whatsoever of them being relegated. Lead once more by the great play of **Tyler Rosenlund** in midfield, Firefighters battled hard throughout this match and might well consider themselves hard done by not to come away with anything to show for their efforts. Abbotsford United could certainly feel the home side's intensity in this match as they were made to work hard to carve out any opportunities worth noting. **Colton O'Neill** and **Roshan Gosal** were dangerous as usual, but had to settle for half chances as the game remained scoreless at the break. The second half was much the same as the first, however, this time around Abbotsford were able to find their moment of magic. The ever-creative **Tyson Hunter** in midfield picked out **Parman Minhas** who was away to the races. Burnaby goalkeeper **James Pistrin**, who had been sharp as usual to this point of the match, timed his challenge all wrong and the referee pointed to the spot. Pistrin was unable to atone for his mistake as Abby's leading scorer, **Reece Branion**, stepped up to confidently convert the penalty. Minhas would create the best chance of the day from open play as well when he had a look to provide the visitors with some insurance, but saw his effort glance off the outside of the post. In the end, the penalty would be the only scoring on the day and United keeper **Mike Haladin** would add to his league best clean sheet total with his sixth shutout of the campaign to make the points safe for Abbotsford. Manager Al Alderson was thrilled with his team finding a way to win, saying he was: "Really proud of our guys and the way we battled in a gritty game. Although we only scored one, I was pleased with the handful of opportunities we created against a tough and resilient team and especially proud of a well-earned team clean sheet." Beyond that though, Alderson still had his eye to the future add that him and his side were "really excited for the upcoming games as we hit the business end of the season!" While few would have counted them among the contenders prior to the season, Abbotsford have hung around all season and are within three points of first place with four games to play.

Temple Vancouver United 2-2 Chilliwack FC – Saturday 6:15pm; Hjorth Road #1

Despite being all but destined to finish in last place, UPL newcomers Temple do not appear to be giving up their fight any time soon. Their latest encounter saw them frustrate a Chilliwack side who would have been desperately seeking a win to give them a leg up in their fight to finish outside the bottom two. Temple, though, refuse to go quietly into that good night and, in fact, opened the scoring when **Jakr Othman** set up **Mudiwa Shoniwa** inside ten minutes to give the home side the lead. A resilient Chilliwack would have things turned around before long however, as a first goal of the season from **Zenow Renaerts** and a seventh from leading scorer **Dale Long** had the visitors in the ascendancy ahead of the break. It was certainly looking like Chilliwack would carry their lead into half time and Temple must have once again been worried that it was going to be yet another case of them putting in a good performance but winding up with nothing to show for their efforts. Fortunately for the Surrey boys, a last minute goal from **Arshan Grewal** saw parity restored. Both teams went after a winning goal in the second half and a strong performance from **Amar Takhar** surely had Temple thinking that this might be their chance to grab a first ever UPL win. Alas, no goals would materialize for either side and the two clubs were forced to split the points. Temple manager Brad Dhillon knew his side were close in this one and was able to take heart in their effort. "A good paced game by both teams," he said, adding that "In second half both teams got chances but the goalies prevailed."



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Here's how the table looks after Week 17:

Umbro Premier (Fall) - Pool: A

Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
Port Moody SC A	17	10	4	3	51	19	32	34
Coastal FC A	17	9	6	2	44	18	26	33
Langley United A	17	9	4	4	44	24	20	31
Abbotsford United A	17	9	4	4	40	23	17	31
Surrey Utd Firefighters	17	8	4	5	26	25	1	28
Chilliwack FC	17	2	7	8	21	45	-24	13
Burnaby Firefighters	17	2	6	9	11	37	-26	12
Temple VAN United FC	17	0	3	14	18	64	-46	3

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This week's Brown's Social House Player of the week is Graeme Meers from Port Moody Gunners. It was a hattrick performance for Meers as he lifted his team to the top of the UPL with a 4-1 win over fellow title challengers Langley United. His goals also lifted him personally to the top of the Golden Boot race, having now scored an impressive 17 goals in as many matches. Meers has been stirring the drink out in Port Moody all season and he now becomes our second multi-time POTW. Congratulations Graeme, you have won a \$25 gift card courtesy of Brown's Social House!



THIS WEEK'S UPL SCHEDULE

Fri 02/01/2019 8:00PM	Chilliwack FC vs. Burnaby Firefighters	Tzeachten Turf #1
Sat 02/02/2019 4:00PM	Port Moody Gunners vs. Coastal FC	Trasolini Turf
Sat 02/02/2019 6:00PM	Abbotsford United vs. Langley United	Mouat Turf #3
Sat 02/02/2019 6:15PM	Temple VAN United vs. Surrey United	Hjorth Road #1

One to watch this week is most definitely Port Moody against Coastal. With just three matches remaining after this round of fixtures, this match almost feels like a cup final of sorts as, should Port Moody come away with the win, a four point cushion over the defending champions might just be enough to see it out. From early on in the campaign, the Gunners made it known that they would be staking a claim to the title, as they roared out of the gate, going undefeated through the first six games of the season. That great stretch of form included and emphatic, statement making 4-0 win over Coastal in their first meeting of the year. This surely would have served as the proverbial "shot across the bow" for the champions, and they responded by climbing their way back to the top of the table over the following months. Indeed, the second encounter between the sides was an unequivocal response by



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Coastal, with them emerging 3-1 winners this time around. So what will the third and final round (at least in UPL play) bring between these two title hopefuls? Well hopefully a spectacular showpiece that puts the best the FVSL has to offer on display for all to see. Oh, and it might just decide this year's champion as well!

There is also a crunch clash between Langley United and Abbotsford United who are both hoping to keep their title hopes alive. The winner will have a chance to make up ground on at least one of the two sides ahead of them. Chilliwack FC and Burnaby Firefighters have also got an important game as those two sides look to avoid finishing second bottom and any possibility of a relegation playoff. Once again there is plenty to capture the imagination this weekend in the UPL.

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