



Fraser Valley Soccer League



December 25, 2019

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

In what is shaping up to be one of, if not the, most hotly contested Umbro Premier League title races in history. Five teams are within three points of first place, with Abbotsford United and Langley United currently co-leaders after their results this weekend. With so many games still to be played, it is clearly anybody's race and it would take a brave soul indeed to be willing to lay down a wager on who will ultimately lift the UPL title come the New Year at this juncture!

Here's a recap of all of this week's action:

SAFC Red Bulls 3-2 CCB Azad – Friday 8:45pm; Cloverdale Athletic Park #1

Coming off their first ever FVSL and UPL win last week, CCB Azad were hoping that momentum would carry them to further points against a slumping SAFC Red Bull's side that had begun the season well, but had now lost four straight matches. It looked very much like a continuation of those trends in the early going of this match as CCB started brightly and were rewarded for their early enterprising play with a goal nice goal from **Brennen Naiker**. This, however, seemed to spark SAFC into life and within a few minutes of going behind **Brad Heffey** pulled things back to square when his lobbed finish found the back of the net. The game became a good midfield battle for the next period with CCB's influential **Gagan Josan** matching up against SAFC's **Thomas Kargbo** as both players tried to carve out an opening for their team. It would take a set piece to open the scoring with SAFC getting their noses in front thanks to one half of their twin towers in defense, **Dan Hamson**, rising to meet the ball at the back post. Hamson was immense all night defensively along with partner **Brandon Nair**, though the two were unable to prevent CCB from equalizing before half time. Josan delivered a long freekick into the area that Red Bulls were unable to clear and **Harman Aujla** was able to bang home to level things up going into the break. In the second period, both teams focused on defending as they knew the next goal was likely to be the winner. CCB centre back **Navraj Purewal** was in a battle with SAFC's Heffey for most of the evening and he and his defensive cohorts did a decent job of keeping the Red Bulls attack at bay. That being said, the return from suspension of the often irresistible **Emmanuel Ekeh** did in deed prove vital, as his ability to use his pace a guile to unlock defenses made a difference. CCB goalkeeper **Josh Banipal** was at full stretch to make a spectacular diving save to tip one of Ekeh's efforts over the bar, but SAFC's leading scorer would not be denied as he found a way to score the winning goal and get Red Bulls back into the win column.

Langley United 4-0 Vancouver United SC – Friday 9pm; Yorkson Turf

Suddenly Langley United are the hottest team in the UPL. A miserable start to the season saw them bounced early from the Soccer City Premier League Cup and then win just one of their first four UPL matches. Since then, however, they had won three in a row coming into this match, including handing early title contenders Abbotsford their first loss of the campaign and shutting out the reign UPL Champions, Port Moody, 2-0 last time out. They welcomed bottom of the table Vancouver United on Friday night and their strong form was no match for their floundering visitors. That being said, the first half was a well contested affair, with only a Vancouver United defensive miscue leading to them conceding a goal. The game remained close until an error from the Vancouver United goalkeeper put the ball on a platter for Langley to double their lead. After that the spark went out of the visitors and the score would reach 4-0 by full time. When the dust had settled **Chad De Boer** and **Colin Jones**, along with **Bryce Wipp** accounted for the goals, while **Hudson Nelles** chalked up his league leading fourth



Fraser Valley Soccer League



clean sheet of the season, and third in a row. There was also yet another goal for **Brody Thomas** who continues to be unstoppable at all levels of FVSL competition. Langley midfielder **Connor Hilderbrant** was once more instrumental in controlling the game and creating chances for the home side who climb into a share of first place thanks to their fourth win on the bounce. Nick Cantelon and fullback Devin Gilroy also put in top performances in the victory. For Vancouver United, midfielder **Ravnoor Banga** stood out and midfielder **Rajvir Bains** worked tirelessly, but simply did not get the support he needed in order to create chance with Vancouver United currently decimated by injuries.

Port Moody Gunners 3-0 Surrey United Firefighters – Saturday 4pm; Trasolini Turf

Injuries have been the theme of the season for Surrey United as they were unable to even field a team to travel to Port Moody when these two sides were scheduled to play in the SC Cup. This time they were able to play, but their injury woes were seemingly happy to travel along with them. After losing a player within minutes of the match kicking off, Surrey suffered a hammer blow when stalwart midfielder **Dave Adams** tore his MCL just after the half hour mark, ending his game and, likely, his season. **Evan Chow** then succumbed to a serious hamstring injury, forcing Surrey to play with only ten men. They managed to make it to half time still scoreless, but defending UPL Golden Boot winner **Graeme Meers**, who had squandered a handful of first half chances, took advantage of the undermanned opposition and opened the scoring with a nice finish. Surrey were then reduced by a further player after an altercation between the teams led to a red card. With a two-man advantage the Gunners went about sewing up the points and **Dale Long** added a pair of late goals to seal the result, while goalkeeper **Richard Meister** turned away anything that Surrey was able to produce in reply. Surrey striker **Ethan Clayborne-Collins** did his best to find a route to goal, but was one against three most of the evening. "Dreadful evening for us," was how Surrey assistant manager Dave Hleuka summed it up. "Not just for losing three key players but of all nights and teams to pull up short on was really disappointing."

Abbotsford United 6-3 Coastal FC – Saturday 6pm; Mouat Turf #3

All the elements were present for a cracking match between two top sides in Abbotsford on Saturday night and a top contest is exactly what Abbotsford United and Coastal FC delivered. The offense began early with Abby's **Dan Goodey** releasing **Colton O'Neil** who put his cross on a platter for **Brady Weir** to open the scoring. Instantly Coastal had a reply though as **Justin Turner-Piece** put one in off the far post. Late in the first half the teams switch roles with **Isaac Kyei** scoring to put Coastal in the lead, but **Connor O'Neil** would cross for **Reece Branion** to level things back up straight from the restart. In the second half the home team found another gear though, and **Roshan Gosal** went on a wonderful run, leaving defenders in his wake, before crossing for **Kree Byrne** to put Abbotsford back into the lead just before the hour mark. Minutes later they doubled that lead via a nice finish from Weir for his second of the evening after **Connor Robillard** flicked the ball into his bath following yet another great run from Gosal. If Coastal were hoping for a way back into the match, it was all but extinguished with ten minutes to play when Coastal keeper **Andrew Kowan** tackled Robillard inside the area conceding a penalty and earning himself a red card in the process. Robillard would convert the penalty and there was still time for Gosal to get himself on the scoresheet as well, nodding home after an O'Neill effort struck the crossbar. A consolation goal for Coastal's **Sean Northcote** rounded out the scoring as Abbotsford replaced Coastal back atop the UPL table. "I was so pleased with our entire squad tonight," said Abbotsford Manager Alan Alderson, "we were very sharp and dynamic. Our back line was great and our midfielders defended so well and then were fantastic when we went forward." **Kyle Gibson** had a solid outing for Coastal who will be hoping to return to first place as soon as possible after this setback.



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Here's how the UPL Table looks after Week 8:

Umbro Premier (Fall) - Pool: A

Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
Abbotsford United A	7	5	0	2	25	11	14	15
Langley United A	8	5	0	3	19	10	9	15
Coastal FC A	6	4	1	1	21	9	12	13
Surrey Utd Firefighters	6	4	0	2	13	9	4	12
Port Moody SC A	6	4	0	2	11	7	4	12
SAFC Red Bulls	7	3	0	4	14	19	-5	9
CCB Azad	6	1	1	4	7	14	-7	4
Vancouver United SC	8	0	0	8	3	34	-31	0

BROWNS SOCIAL HOUSE PLAYER OF THE WEEK

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This week's Brown's Social House Player of the week is Brady Weir from Abbotsford United. Brady has been a constant powerhouse performer for Abbotsford so far this season and that vein of form continued this week against Coastal FC. Brady was a force all over the field helping create dangerous chances and scoring two goals in United's 6-3 win that takes them back to the top of the table.

Congratulations Brady, you've won a \$25 gift card to Brown's Social House!



THIS WEEK'S UPL SCHEDULE:

Fri 11/22/2019 8:45PM

Surrey United Firefighter vs. Langley United

Cloverdale Ath. #2

Fri 11/22/2019 8:45PM

CCB Azad vs. Abbotsford United

Newton Ath. #4

Sat 11/23/2019 4:00PM

Coastal FC vs. Port Moody Gunners

South Surrey Ath. #10

Sat 11/23/2019 6:15PM

Vancouver United SC vs. SAFC Red Bulls

Hjorth Turf #1

After climbing back to the top of the table, Abbotsford United will be looking to stay there when they travel to Surrey to take on second bottom CCB Azad. In spite of their place in the table, Azad have shown that they can give most teams a game in their first season at this level, so United would do well to ensure they do not look to far past the task at hand this Saturday night. So too is the case for SAFC



Fraser Valley Soccer League



Red Bulls who, after knocking off CCB last week, will surely be eyeing the chance to climb back into the Provincial Cup race when they take on last place Vancouver United. It has been a tough go of it for United so far this year, but a cavalier approach from SAFC might just open the door for a surprise result. The real meat of this weekend's schedule comes with a pair of very tasty clashes between some long-time rivals. Langley are hot, having won four straight matches while keeping clean sheets in their last three outings. This has finally got them to the top of the table, albeit tied with Abbotsford who hold a game in hand. Old rivals Surrey got the better of them, 2-0, back at the beginning of the UPL season, but Firefighters are limping into this one, literally. Not only have they lost back to back games, but they have suffered some serious injuries to key personnel, leaving them shorthanded. They are hoping that the cavalry is on the way, but you can be sure that Langley smell blood in the water ahead of this one. The other key match is the showdown between the two previous UPL Champions, Coastal FC and Port Moody Gunners. Again, this is round two in the UPL with Coastal having claimed the first meeting rather easily, 3-1, followed by immediately taking the Soccer City Premier League Cup away from the Gunners the next weekend in a shootout. Neither team has been able to put together the dominant runs of form that saw them storm to titles the past two seasons, though both will surely be eyeing a win over a well matched foe this weekend to kick start their title charge.

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