



July 15, 2017; San Francisco, CA, USA; NASL The Miami FC vs. San Francisco Deltas at Kezar Stadium in Golden Gate Park. Photo: Robert Edwards-KLC fotos.

SF Deltas poised for playoff push despite back-to-back losses against Miami

DAN BERNSTEIN / Jul. 17, 2017 12:00 a.m. / SPORTS



The San Francisco Deltas controlled their destiny in a title race with Miami FC with two games remaining in their inaugural spring NASL season.

A 2-0 win over Puerto Rico FC, paired with Miami's draw against North Carolina FC, meant the Deltas could claim the spring championship and automatic playoff qualification with two victories.

Instead, San Francisco suffered a 7-0 loss to Miami on July 8 – the largest margin of defeat in club history. The Deltas, who had allowed just 10 goals all season before that result, then lost, 3-1, in a rematch with Miami to close the campaign.

But with an expansion roster, simply being in the playoff hunt after the spring season represented a positive step.

The Deltas must either win the fall title or finish as one of two clubs with the next-best combined records between seasons to make the 2017 NASL playoffs. San Francisco posted the second-best mark in the spring campaign.

"We had two losses at the end, which were unfortunate, but we're still in second place, so it's good to build on for the fall season," midfielder Tyler Gibson said.

After San Francisco fell, 3-0, at Kezar Stadium against Jacksonville Armada FC on May 19, the squad went on a six match unbeaten run. The Deltas also advanced to the fourth round of the U.S. Open Cup, where they challenged the San Jose Earthquakes at Avaya Stadium in a 2-0 defeat.

It was an unexpected run of form for a group comprised of players with ties to clubs around the world. Despite their inexperience as a unit, they gelled in the second half of the campaign.

"The team really came together for an expansion team," defender Karl Ouimette said. "All new players, a different system ... and guys really went for it and went 100 percent, and that's why we got the result we had and were successful."

Still, the blowout losses to Miami to end the spring season served as a reminder of the improvements San Francisco needs to make. While the Deltas gained confidence from their second-place finish, they anticipate a tight battle for a playoff spot during the upcoming fall campaign, which begins July 30 at Jacksonville.

"It showed us how difficult this season is going to be," coach Marc Dos Santos said. "It shows every game how competitive it is, every game how difficult it is."

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