

Phoenix Tie Game Late, Fall to Lions On Late Penalty

SAINT LEO, Fla. – Florida Poly men's soccer erased a two-goal halftime deficit with a pair of second-half goals, but Saint Leo converted a late penalty kick to hand the Phoenix a 3-2 defeat Tuesday night at University Soccer Field.

Saint Leo took control early, opening the scoring in the 12th minute when Virgilio Escala found the back of the net. The Lions doubled their advantage at the 18:16 mark as Valentino Suaya finished an opportunity set up by Evan Yockey, sending Florida Poly into halftime trailing 2-0. The Phoenix still generated several chances in the opening 45 minutes, including two shots on goal from Tarquin Adams, but Saint Leo goalkeeper Josh Jones kept Florida Poly off the board.

Florida Poly came out with renewed energy after halftime and began working its way back into the match. The breakthrough came in the 63rd minute when Isaiah Azore scored, cutting the Saint Leo advantage to 2-1. Less than six minutes later, the Phoenix completed the comeback. Kaden Curtin scored at the 68:16 mark off an assist from Jude Mason, leveling the match at 2-2 and completely shifting the momentum in Florida Poly's favor.

The tie lasted just under nine minutes. Saint Leo was awarded a penalty kick in the 77th minute, and Luis Gaitan converted from the spot to put the Lions back in front, 3-2. Florida Poly responded by earning back-to-back corner kicks moments later but was unable to produce another equalizer before the final whistle. The Phoenix defense and goalkeeper Andres Villegas were tested heavily down the stretch as Saint Leo continued to apply pressure.

Villegas finished the night with seven saves, including five in the second half, while facing 17 Saint Leo shots. Florida Poly finished with seven total shots and placed four on target while earning seven corner kicks. Saint Leo recorded 17 shots, including 10 on goal, and earned four corners.

Curtin finished with two shots, while Adams also totaled two attempts and put both on frame. Mason picked up the Phoenix's lone assist of the evening. Azore scored on his only shot of the match, while Curtin converted one of his two attempts.