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Ignition win home opener in dramatic fashion, 16-14

BY ED WRIGHT • OBSERVER STAFF WRITER • DECEMBER 23, 2008

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Ryan Mack's first Xtreme Soccer League goal wasn't nearly as X-citing as his second one.

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And his first one was off-the-charts exciting.

Displaying a crowd-pleasing flair for the dramatic, Mack tallied the game-tying and game-winning goals in the Detroit Ignition's down-to-the-wire 16-14 XSL victory over the New Jersey Ironmen Saturday night at Compuware Arena.

The home-opening triumph evened the winners' record at 1-1 while the Ironmen slipped to 0-2.

"It feels really good," said Mack, moments after he sent the home crowd out into a bitterly cold night with a warm memory. "I was plugging away all game, waiting to get the first one of the season. After I scored the first one, I felt a lot more comfortable out there.

"On the game-winner, I got a nice ball from Kyt (Selaidopoulos) and I put it through the goal-keeper's legs."

Mack, a native of Birmingham and one of the leading point-earners in the now-defunct Major Indoor Soccer League last season, said he's getting more attention from opponents now that super-scorer Jamar Beasley has departed the scene.

"During the first game (an 11-4 loss at Milwaukee), it seemed like they were targeting me more, following me around," said Mack. "It was kind of nice when Jamar was here and I was the guy behind the scenes.

"I have to go out every night and perform as well as I can and help the team when I can."

Mack was one of three home-grown players who played major roles in the Ignition's victory.

Livonia's Tino Scicluna found the back of the net on two of the three shots he fired at Ironmen net-minder Brett Phillips.

And former University of Detroit Mercy star Vahid Assadpour chalked up two goals and an assist for the hosts.

"The first month has been kind of tough for us getting used to one another, plus we've had a lot of injuries," said Mack, referring to how the rebuilt Ignition is meshing. "But a lot of guys stepped up tonight that hadn't played a lot before. I think we showed a lot of heart and I think that's why we pulled through tonight.

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"Winning tonight was awesome, especially because it was so frustrating losing our first game. I think it was important to show our fans that we're still a solid team after we went through some adversity."

Detroit goal-keeper Danny Waltman earned his 100th professional indoor soccer win by stopping 33 shots.

Phillips stuffed 29 shots for the Ironmen.

Detroit wiped out a 3-0 first-quarter lead with goals from Josh Rife and Assadpour.

The Ignition doubled its advantage to 6-3 2:29 into the second quarter when Drew Crawford slid a perfect pass to Assadpour, who one-timed it home.

The Ironmen closed their halftime gap to 6-5 with 25.7 seconds left in the quarter when Rey Martinez capped a 3-on-none break-out with a top-shelf goal.

Detroit led 10-9 after three, but slipped into a 14-10 hole when New Jersey's Shawn Boney converted a Lucio Gonzaga pass with 4:38 to play.

The Ignition's dramatic rally was sparked by Crawford's goal from Assadpour with 2:45 to play.

That set the stage for the heroics of Mack, who tied the game with 5.8 ticks left after securing a Selaidopoulos free-kick pass on the left wing and hammering the ball past Phillips.

The game-winner came 3:06 into the extra session when he scored from a ridiculous angle along the boards, ripping a shot through Phillips' five-hole.

Mack led Detroit with 10 shots. Zach Wilkes notched a team-high four blocks.

The Ignition returns to action on Saturday when it travels to Chicago to take on the Storm at the Sears Centre.

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