



MONMOUTH HOSTS BUFFALO IN KEY DII MATCHUP

By Alex Goff | 10.19.13

The fortunes of the Empire DII club league could well be decided this weekend as 4-1 Buffalo travels to 5-0 Monmouth.

Monmouth can put some distance (or, to use this year's over-used sports word, separation) between them and their chasers with a victory. They still will have to contend with Princeton Athletic Club, who play winless Rochester, but it will still be a big day for Monmouth.

Head Coach Pat Moroney praised this season's captains, Evan Fitzgerald and Nic Lucarelli.

"Both have shown a great ability to maintain the standards that Joe Lucarelli and Kevin Delia brought to the role," said Moroney. "With Joe and Kevin playing we have the club captains from the last six years in the team."

Three rookies straight out of college have all made a big impact - Rob Benedetto (Delaware), Mike Dorata (Rowan), and Ryan Greenwood (Rutgers). They have augmented the veterans well.

"It's an exciting mix," said Moroney.

Up front Mark Hardy, Mario Fragale, David Del Pizzo and Ken Pape are making strides, while Russoniello works tirelessly with rookie Greenwood and Steve Sherac at lock. This week Monmouth welcomes back veteran lock James Barlow to the squad for the first time this season following the birth of his daughter. Alizar Zorojew returns following a broken hand in week one.

"Three players have made huge improvements this season - Mark Hardy, Andrew Poulson, and Christopher Ciraolo are growing in confidence with every game," enthused Moroney.

Buffalo, meanwhile, are nicely rested after a bye weekend.

Two weeks ago they beat Union behind four tries from their deep three of Mike Lang, Ian Blain, and Travis Silvermale.

Veteran flanker Alex Nadiak remains a pillar of strength for them, and Danny Ryan is a leader at scrumhalf. But they will have to bring a lot of grit to handle the Monmouth pack.

Meanwhile, Moroney said that what worries him about this weekend is the league's rules that don't force a traveling team to bring a 2nd side. *(Clarification: Buffalo fields a team in DIII, and thus they don't have to field a B team against Monmouth. Moroney is not happy with the rule, but doesn't blame Buffalo.)*

"We have reached out to colleges but they are now unavailable due to league play and have had a posting on the Union site for weeks without a result either," said Moroney. "We use the in-season games to recruit as we don't have a pool of ex-pats and college players the teams closer to NY have - so we heavily target crossover athletes. The hook for crossover players is getting them on the field and having fun. Now we have five or six new athletes that just need to play rugby without a game Saturday.

"The Development side has very specific targets this season including pushing guys into the 23 on game day and I'll have to talk to a couple of the lads about how they are doing everything right but won't be able to show us their progression this week."

Monmouth has development team coaches in Chris Wagner and James Lenihan.

"With Brian Sheehy on board as a forwards coach we now have a very focused coaching group to support and develop these players."