



Gyan's Header Gives The Highlanders First Taste of Victory

Oct 26: NorthEast United FC clinched their first victory of the Hero Indian Super League season 6 after defeating Odisha FC by 2-1 at the IGA Stadium in Guwahati. This was NorthEast's first home game of the season after playing their first game away to Bengaluru FC.

Redeem Tlang opened the scoring in the 2nd minute of the game giving the Highlanders their first goal of the season but Xisco Hernandez scored the equaliser for the visitors in the 71st minute. Star striker Asamoah Gyan scored the winning goal in the 84th minute to make it 2-1 in favour of the hosts.

After the draw against Bengaluru FC, coach Robert Jarni made three changes to his starting eleven. Panagiotis Triadis, Milan Singh came into the team replacing Nikhil Kadam and Lalthathanga Khawlhing whereas Wayne Vaz made his debut for the Highlanders replacing Mislav Komorski.

It just took two minutes for the Highlanders to open their scoring and the first goal of the season. Rakesh Pradhan's quick throw was headed down by Martin Chaves into the feet of Pana to let him make an inch-perfect pass for Redeem who put it past the opposition's keeper who was off his line to make it 1-0 for the hosts. This was Redeem's second goal of his career for the Highlanders.

The visitors then tried their best to make a comeback but the sturdy defence of the Highlanders didn't give them any space to do so. In the following minutes, Odisha did get a couple of shots on target but in-form Subhasish made sure none went past him.

NorthEast United then had their chance from a corner when Pana's delivery was headed clear by the visitors' defender but it fell at the feet of Pana to put in a cross which was headed well by Wayne Vaz but the defender's header went whiskers past the bar. In the 35th minute, goalkeeper Subhasish Roy Choudhury had to be at his very best punch Xisco's free-kick away of danger. The rest of the half didn't see much of action and the Highlanders went into the dressing room with a 1-0 lead at the break.

Both the teams started the second half with an attacking approach creating chances on either end of the pitch. In the 57th minute, Odisha's Nandhakumar had a go on goal after going past a couple of NorthEast's defender but his shot was brilliantly cleared off the goal-line by Kai Heerings. The following minutes saw Odisha create a few more chances but Subhasish on the goal and the defence line led by Kai Heerings made the 1-0 lead intact.

It was in the 71st minute when Odisha finally found the equaliser. Senegalese Diagne whipped in a low cross from the right to find Xisco right in front of goal who just flicked it past Subhasish leaving the keeper with no time to react and made it 1-1 for the visitors. With substitute Maximiliano on the ground NorthEast then kept attacking and in the 73rd minute, a foul on Maxi saw Odisha's defender Delgado sent off. The resulting free-kick didn't trouble the opposition keeper and the Highlanders kept going in search of the winner.

NorthEast United had a chance to regain the lead in the 83rd minute when Rakesh's cross from the left was met well by Redeem but his shot was blocked by Odisha's defence. But the rebound fell perfectly for Captain Leudo who had a go at goal but yet again Odisha managed to put the ball out for a corner.

And the corner came in as the perfect chance to retrieve the lead. Substitute Puitea's left-footed delivery was meant to find Gyan in the middle who made it look simple as he pounced on his header to guide the ball to the back of the net to make it 2-1 for the Highlanders in the 84th minute. Odisha tried to get back into the game with waves of attacks in the remaining minutes but the resilient Highlanders held onto the lead and secure their first win of the season with a scoreline of 2-1.

NorthEast United will next be playing host to FC Goa on the 1st of November at the IGA Stadium in Guwahati.