Blaze Newcomers Shine in Home Opener

On Saturday, the Blaze took on the Indianapolis Impalas in the second of their cross division matches and came away with a big 29-10 win.

"Indy was tough opponent, but this game was a big step for us," Blaze captain Kyle Bryant said. "After our match with Cleveland we needed to fix some areas of our game that would allow us to play our style.

"Our offense recognized where the space was and continued to hit hard lines. Proud of everyone that stepped onto the field Saturday. Great win for the Chicago Blaze!"

The game went back and forth in the opening minutes with each team failing to score on their penalty kicks. But the Blaze got on the scoreboard first with newcomer and recent Alabama graduate Andrew Kallas scoring just left of the post, making the game 5-0.

Indianapolis countered back with a score from scrum-half Michael Temple taking advantage of a Blaze penalty to nod up the game at 5 where the score remained until the half.

That was as close as the game got as the Blaze opened the second half with some great counter attacking, which ultimately led to the second score of the day by Kallas as he dotted the ball in the corner of the try zone giving the Blaze a 10-5 lead. After the restart, the Blaze had some great go-forward ball before fullback Vidal Martinez found a streaking Kevin Koch on the wing for the second quick score of the half, pushing the lead to 17-5 Blaze.

After the Blaze made some tactical substitutions, the scoring did not stop, as center Zane Jackson found the try zone after hitting a hard line and adding a bonus point for the home team. Jake Reed was the next try scorer for the Blaze, scoring under the posts to give a 29-5 lead for the Blaze with just under 20 minutes left in the game.

The men from Indianapolis responded by scoring a late try in the far corner to cut the lead to 29-10 in the 72nd minute. In the end, the Blaze defense - led by another newcomer Chris Lamberton - proved to be too much, leaving the final score set at 29-10.

"We played like a team, punished Indy with our creative counter attack," Blaze assistant coach West Jackson said. "We used our punishing centers to our advantage to create space. The key take away from Saturday is we started playing as a team and not individuals."

Although not mentioned in any of the scoring, it was the play of Blaze scrum-half Brandyn Crotty that really set the table for all the scoring. His quick decision making and running with the ball in hand was the X factor Saturday as he was awarded the Blaze Man of the Match.

After the D2 game, the D4 boys took the field for a B-side half. In what was supposed to be a full match, the D4 team received a forfeit win because Indianapolis did not bring a full side.

Still, scoring was at a premium for both sides. The Impalas scored two unconverted tries, but it was no match for the Blaze as their free-flowing attack scored four of their own. Tries by Matt Martenson and Gage Palmer had the sideline roaring. It was a good test for the side as they avenged their only defeat of a season ago.

The D4 team now travels to Kenosha, Wisc., to take on the Mammoths in a league matchup this Saturday, September 14. The D2 team also hits the road, as they look to continue their winning ways in a matchup against in-state rival Southside Irish at the Dan Ryan Woods.

Be sure to check our social media for kickoff times this weekend. Go, Blaze!

Tries: Andrew Kallas (2), Kevin Koch, Zane Jackson, Jake Reed
Conversions: Alex Binetti (2)

Starters
1.Kieran Palmiter
2.Matt Kopala
3.John Needham
4.John Medina
5.Kyle Bryant(C)
6.Rapolos Dikinis
7.Chris Lamberton
8.Jim Moscato

9.Brandyn Crotty

10. Eddie Smith

11.Alex Binetti(VC)

12.Andrew Kallas

13.Josh Uthe

14.Kevin Koch

15.Vidal Martinez

Reserves

16.Erik Otten

17.Art Bell

18.Joe Dillon

19.Ben Kipp

20.Jake Reed

21.Derek Mohler

22.Zane Jackson

23.Rene Salinas

COACHING STAFF

Head Coach I Derek Williams

Assistant Coach I West Jackson

Assistant Coach I Alex Baro