



1996 Playoff Qualifiers  
1997 D3Pro Mid Atlantic Division Champions  
2008 PDL Mid-Atlantic Division Champions  
2008 PDL Eastern Conference Regular Season Champions  
2008 PDL National Semifinalists  
2009 PDL Regular Season National Champions  
2010 PDL Eastern Conference Champions

# Press Release

**Contact:** Art Auchenbach, General Manager  
[art@readingunitedac.com](mailto:art@readingunitedac.com)  
610-927-4474

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



## Reading Stays United to Capture 2010 PDL Eastern Conference Title

*Reading defeats MPS 2-1 in conference semi-final, Ottawa 3-2 in final to capture Eastern Conference Crown*

**READING, PA (August 1, 2010)** – Reading United A.C. were deemed to be the team to beat early in the 2010 PDL campaign. After a series of injuries, players returning to school, and passport dilemmas, their late season 2010 potential for success was considered average at best. With a late Evans Frimpong goal in the Eastern Conference Semifinal in Ottawa, Reading defeated MPS Phoenix 2-1. They turned around 24 hours later and did it again against the Eastern Conference top seed and host, Ottawa Fury, defeating the Fury 3-2 in exhilarating fashion.

Reading's late season roster was ravaged and not being awarded a conference championship host hurt even more. Reading United travelled to Ottawa with 14 players, several of whom were nursing serious injuries. As the team entered Canada they were hurt once again. Reading was forced to send one player back into the U.S. due to visa issues, further compounding Reading's roster troubles. After a 14 hour travelling ordeal, the team finally settled into their Ottawa hotel beds, preparing to face Northeast Division runner-ups, MPS Phoenix.

The Reading – MPS Phoenix game was the first game of the semifinal double header. The field conditions were dry, warm, with the bright sun being a factor. In the 24<sup>th</sup> minute, Reading defender Nick Bibbs severely reinjured his hamstring and Reading coach Brendan Burke was forced to use his lone field player sub, Jack Reid. The game remained a tight, physical contest and MPS was content to bash the ball forward from their



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defenders to their forward targets, but Reading's defense, anchored by recalled MLS draftee Adam Welch, was up to the challenge. Thanks to some resolute Reading defending, the teams entered the half knotted at 0-0. In the 55<sup>th</sup> minute MPS Phoenix's physical presence was rewarded when star forward Chris Banks deposited a strong shot for a 1-0 MPS lead.

Instead of hanging their heads, Reading refocused and worked to continue their 2010 season. Their tireless work rate was rewarded in the 73<sup>rd</sup> minute when Luke Mulholland continued his offensive brilliance and struck a hard angled rocket, off a deft CJ Sapong touch, into the side netting of the MPS goal to tie the game up 1-1. The final 15 minutes resulted in several clear opportunities for both sides and in the 89<sup>th</sup> minute the Reading bench was clamoring for a foul to be called but the Canadian officials were content to let a Reading advantage to develop. Thankfully the officials decision to play on held because captain Steve Hogan swung a liner across the face of the goal, where big Reading target CJ Sapong froze MPS 'keeper Ryan Thompson allowing the ball to continue through where an onrushing, unmarked, Evans Frimpong blasted the ball past a shocked MPS defense and into the back of the net, silencing the MPS bench and sending the lone Reading sub and coaching staff into delirium. Two minutes of stoppage time passed and Reading celebrated their unlikely come from behind 2-1 victory.

Saturday's other semifinal saw Mid-Atlantic division #2 seed Ironbound Express start strong, but #1 seed Ottawa Fury used their dominating home support and winning streak to post a 2-0 shutout to advance to the final game.

After a short 24 hour rest and some improvised hotel ice baths, the Reading United squad entered the Algonquian Soccer Complex (home of the Ottawa Fury) with nothing to lose, simply hoping to keep the game close and ride home with their heads held high. Reading coach Brendan Burke implored his players, "Treat the game as two separate 45 minute games and leave it all on the field. Come out and show them we are ready for a fight!" Reading would need strong teamwork, mistake free interplay, and outstanding goalkeeping from veteran 'keeper Jeremy Vuolo. Ottawa entered the contest with an astounding 2 year home record of 53 goals for and only 2 against. Ottawa intended to use their physical presence, advantage in numbers, and home field crowd to quickly silence the Reading starting eleven (and three Reading coaching personnel, one sub, and three fans). But as is often the case with the game of soccer, what appears on paper to be a foregone conclusion often does not result in what the pundits and press would have you believe.

Reading started the game tentatively and needed several huge Jeremy Vuolo saves, plus some fortuitous saves by the Reading goal posts, to keep the game scoreless. Then in the 35<sup>th</sup> minute Reading midfielder Tyler Witmer used the cross bar to his advantage and had his shot bounce down off the cross bar and over the line for a deserved 1-0 lead (Sapong assist). Reading was ecstatic to enter the break at half with a 1-0 victory. The confident Ottawa players, bench, and fans were quickly silenced and shadows of doubt crept into their minds.

After the break, Reading reasserted their physical play and gigantic heart and Tyler Witmer again seized the opportunity provided by an Ottawa defensive turnover to deposit a second goal in the 49<sup>th</sup> minute for a deserved, albeit unexpected, 2-0 lead. However in the 73<sup>rd</sup> minute, the Ottawa pressure continued and substitute Justin Dasah broke through and while the officials missed a clear hand-ball, Dasah, poked home a



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shot to cut the lead to 2-1 and reignite the home crowd. To add to the Reading difficulties, team captain Stephen Hogan drew an unfortunate 2<sup>nd</sup> yellow card which dropped Reading down to 10 men for the final 15 minutes of the game. Ottawa's excitement was quickly subdued 3 minutes later, when Luke Mulholland again took a CJ Sapong feed to bulge the back of the net and reclaim the two goal cushion and 3-1 lead. The final minutes of the match were excruciating for fans of both teams and Ottawa's vast resources of subs started to wear on the weary, Reading warriors. In the 90<sup>th</sup> minute Ottawa's offensive pressure paid off and Dasah was on target again to cut the lead to 3-2. Reading were expecting to have the resulting restart have center official Matthew Arduini blow the whistle, but Reading were astonished to find out they had an additional five minutes of stoppage time. Apparently each Ottawa substitution (5 subs) resulted in one minute of stoppage time. Reading were able to dig in and run out the clock and leave Ottawa with a determined, inspired, two game performance that resulted in a second Eastern Conference title for coach Brendan Burke and the Reading United squad.

Reading will join Thunder Bay, Portland, and Baton Rouge to round out the teams in the PDL Championship Final Four, to be held in Portland, Oregon Friday August 6 and Saturday August 7. The PDL Championship game will be broadcast live on Fox Soccer Channel.

#### **ABOUT READING UNITED AC**

Reading United A.C. (formerly Reading Rage) is the Greater Reading area's premier minor league soccer team. Led by the ownership group of Berks Professional Sports, Inc. the club was founded in 1995 as the Reading Rage. As the club entered its 15<sup>th</sup> season a name, logo, and color change was made to better feature the ties to the local and state community as well as the soccer goals of the team and its partners. Reading United is a Player Development Partner of the Philadelphia Union MLS team. For more information about Reading United AC, visit [www.readingunitedac.com](http://www.readingunitedac.com).



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