

Takoma Academy vs Grace Christian

Another Tiger season has come yet again. And what better way to start a new season than with the first game being a championship rematch. Yep, it was Takoma Academy against Grace Christian to kick off the new season. Grace Christian returned with an offseason full of glory, while Takoma returned seeking vengeance and redemption. This was going to be a good game. It was a chance for both teams to establish early dominance and hope that the dominance would last for the whole season. I highly doubted that the Tigers would show any intimidation and psychological bad-play. Nevertheless, soccer was back and each player eagerly waited to make an impact.

1st Half

The rivalry was about to get underway with all implications of being an amazing game. TA with hopes of redemption of winning it all and Grace Christian trying to defend their title. The game started with both teams trying to find their niche and a successful pattern. As most games start, there were a lot of turnovers on both sides and the ball possession was about equal. Grace Christian was running their offense with their best player, and forward, Brady, but his surrounding players failed to execute. This was a new-look Grace Christian team, who had to try to perform without their former senior who had graduated. TA tried to gain a foothold in the game with Henderson Rodriguez taking most of the touches early on. There were

big expectations for Henderson as this was his senior year, and he would carry a heavy load on the scoring end. He wanted to set a tone for the game. The Grace goalie kept them in the game as he ruined Henderson's opportunities. Grace failed to exploit chances for open through-balls and when you don't take advantage of opportunities the Tigers make you pay. On TA's attacking side Henderson took a pass from the sideline and an excellent push for the game's first goal, and it was 1-0 Tigers. The game stayed kid-friendly for most of the half, until tensions flared, after Stefan Laurry missed another one-on-one opportunity. This rivalry was always kind of chippy and it awakened when Henderson protected his teammate and brother Darwin from being pushed around. The half neared its end as Grace Christian was in a hole and the Takoma defense shined behind players like Max Diaz, a rising star, and new face Darren Caleb. Caleb continued to show prowess at goalie. Near the end of the half, veteran defender, Myles Brown, spoke to first year defender Max Diaz: "I would rather get offside than get beat". TA was in control in the first official game of 2018.

2nd Half

To ensure victory the job now for the Tigers was to build their lead with add-on goals. The Tigers kept the ball on their side for the majority of the half, but if you asked one fan in the stands, Takoma could have very well had a 5-goal lead, but the game became more physical and injuries occurred. Through all the delay, Grace Christian tried to gain an edge but they were to no avail. At least not with Darren Caleb at goal. He shined even brighter, maybe even showing shades of Darian, at-least performance wise. Senior forward, Stefan Laurry could not have had a more frustrating and awful

game shooting the ball. There were a number of chances, and if they could have been knocked through the net, it could have put TA up by at least 5. What was refreshing was that new players like Dejuan Hemsley and Solomon Hill had small impacts on the game, with nice-touch passing by Solomon, and Dejuan with persistent pressure. Grace Christian could really never form any sort of great possession and positive possession. Henderson went down again and every Takoma fan felt anxious, wondering if it was worse than the last time. Resulting, was a free kick from Darwin Rodriguez and it was impossible to miss with his skill set. Sure enough, the ball went through the net off the feet of Darwin. Now it was 2-0 Tigers! The game was stagnant for a while with both teams going for every touch. Grace Christian simply did not have the firepower they had the previous two years. With 20 minutes left, Coach Brown had something to say to his team: "There is still 20 minutes left, don't let them get some water and come back and score goals. Still play like it is 0-0." The defense definitely played like that as time was running out for Grace Christian. They simply did not have the personnel to generate any comeback. Knowing this, Takoma played with satisfaction and confidence. Takoma was able to salivate on an opening game win as the final whistle sounded. TA was now 1-0 on the record books!