



NEW YORK CITY FC — MATCH REPORT

Heavily-depleted New York City FC loses 2-1 in Nashville

New York City FC kept it close but their squad, with eight players ruled out with injuries, ultimately fell to Supporters' Shield leaders Nashville SC to close out the pre-World Cup portion of the MLS season.

ABE SHIRE

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NYCFC converging on Hany Mukhtar. Photo: [@NashvilleSC](#)

There were moments of individual brilliance, like Malachi Jones pulling strings on the wing and Nico Fernández Mercáu scoring his 10th goal of the season, but that was about it.

A New York City FC team we don't see often didn't play cohesively and lost 2-1 to Nashville SC to at GEODIS Park.

NYCFC looked like a team in need of the World Cup break, as nearly every promising attack was snuffed out by Nashville.

GAME STATS

New York City: 1.36 xG, 7 shots, 4 shots on target, 52% possession, 492 passes, 87% pass accuracy, 12 fouls, 3 corners, 4 saves

Nashville: 0.75 xG, 12 shots, 6 shots on target, 48% possession, 448 passes, 88% pass accuracy, 11 fouls, 6 corners, 3 saves

Goals:

- Nashville, Jeisson Palacios, 17'
- New York City, Nico Fernández Mercáu (PK), 23'
- Nashville, Maxwell Woledzi, 49'

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Heavily-depleted squad

NYCFC went into the match in Nashville with eight players listed as out on the injury report, and four of them regulars and key contributors, including Maxi Moralez, Aiden O'Neill, Kevin O'Toole, and Keaton Parks.

There weren't many changes made to the Starting XI, but the matchday squad still looked unusually thin: Four of the nine players on the bench had yet to make a league appearance going into the game this season, with midfielder and second-round 2026 MLS SuperDraft pick Kevin Pierre coming on to [make his MLS debut](#) in the 85th minute.

Nico Cavallo started in place of Kevin O'Toole again, while Arnau Farnós played the No 10 role in Moralez's absence. That was a display of faith from Pascal Jansen, considering it's not a position Farnos had played for the first team. Jones also made his first league start since the May 3 [loss to DC United](#) at Citi Field.

NYCFC created few chances in the first half, and Agustín Ojeda will regret a 12th-minute shot that was close on goal but easily saved by Nashville's Brian Schwake. Ojeda got on the end of a quick attack against the run of play and managed to create space for a shot, but he couldn't give NYCFC any momentum. Nashville controlled much of the opening 20 minutes and was rewarded when defender Jeisson Palacios headed a corner through Freese's arms.



Schwake vs Freese stats, Freese is on the right, via [Sofascore](#)

NYCFC responded when Nico [netted the equalizer](#) from the penalty spot. Jones was roughed up as he drew this penalty, getting back up and clutching his shoulder. Although the injury seemed to bother him throughout the match, he still kept the Nashville defense on its toes and *nearly* recorded an assist after beating his defender. What looked to have been NYCFC's first corner of the game, but was ruled a goal kick, was thanks to the work of Jones.

Jones left shortly after the hour mark, limping off the field after a busy night. It's the kind of performance that will earn him more minutes once his shoulder recovers.

Defensive frailty

This backline—Nico Cavallo, Raul Gustavo, Thiago Martins, and Tayvon Gray—still looks like a group trying to find chemistry. Cavallo hasn't had much time with this crew, but the other three don't have many excuses. Some may argue this isn't New York City's strongest defense, and that's fair.

Raul Gustavo was brought in to add a more physical presence, while Kai Trewin was expected to step directly into Justin Haak's role. Gustavo's physicality makes him easier to beat on the dribble, and Trewin hasn't been utilized as expected in defense.

There was a noticeable lack of chemistry, communication, and spacing early in the night, though the NYCFC defense found its footing for the rest of the first half, after Nico's penalty and after conceding a first goal.

The second half was a different story.

NYCFC faced a barrage of chances from Nashville soon after play resumed, with a careless giveaway in their own end setting Hany Mukhtar up for a shot that trickled through Freese, but not into Freese's net. A corner followed a clearance, and a cross came across the face of the net with Freese out of position, fortunately without consequence. Nashville tried another cross, this time from the far side, finding Maxwell Woledzi, who eventually put a header past Freese and into the net.

NYCFC struggled in many ways in this match, like with man-marking, connecting key passes, and containing Mukhtar throughout the night.

Now comes the World Cup break, and for NYCFC, a much-needed chance to heal, with a lengthy injury report. Any one player coming back will feel like an incoming transfer.