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Antigua's 3 First Half Goals Sink USVI In Opening World Cup Qualifier

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Quinton Griffith, who scored two of Antigua and Barbuda's three goals, gets ready to take a free kick during Saturday Night's match at the Bethlehem Soccer Complex. By. KYLE MURPHY FOR VI CONSORTIUM

ST. CROIX — The Virgin Islands lost its first match of the Concacaf World Cup Qualifier after falling behind 3-0 in the first half against Antigua and Barbuda on Saturday night at the Bethlehem Soccer Stadium. The team was unable to recover in the second half, which resulted in a 3-0 loss.

The first goal was scored by Peter Beyers in the 28th minute to give Antigua the lead.

In his post-match interview, USVI Assistant Coach Jorge Zavala said Antigua's first goal caused a shift in momentum as USVI players were able to get behind Antigua's defense before the goal was scored, but were unable to do so thereafter.

The Virgin Islands fell behind 2-0 in the 35th minute on a penalty kick by Quinton Griffith. This decision was questioned by the assistant coach in his post-match interview.

In the 43rd minute Antigua extended their lead to three following a second goal by Mr. Griffith.

Even with the resounding defeat, Mr. Zavala praised the USVI team's effort. "The boys kept fighting which was tremendous. That was the more important thing for us, to just keep on working on the things we've been working on for the last two months," Mr. Zavala said.

The coach credited better refereeing and the USVI's ball possession performance in the second half for holding Antigua and Barbuda scoreless for the entire 45 minutes of play.

Julius Brown, a midfielder for the USVI team, said it was frustrating going down 3-0 in the first half. However, he spoke of the pride he felt playing for the Senior Men's National Team.

"I've played for the national team before but it's such a different experience playing for the senior team. I feel so honored to represent my islands, my county," he said.

The players and coaches were thankful for the support from the fans who came out to watch the game live.

The Virgin Islands will have a quick chance to redeem themselves during a match against Grenada away on Tuesday.

The win moves Antigua and Barbuda into first place in the group with four points in the standings, with the team being the only one in the group to play two matches. El Salvador beat Grenada 2-0 and is second in the group with three points. Antigua's first qualifying match was a 2-2 draw with Montserrat.