

# The ADVOCATE

## Stamford, CT

### Stamford's Arteaga holds his own against Red Bulls

By Mike Levitt  
Correspondent

Updated 11:15 p.m., Wednesday, June 29, 2011



*Stamford native Jhonny Arteaga takes a sip from his water bottle after his FC New York team lost to the New York Red Bulls Tuesday night in the US Open Cup. Arteaga is wearing the Red Bulls jersey he was given during the traditional postgame uniform exchange.  
Photo: Contributed Photo / Stamford Advocate Contributed*

HARRISON, N.J. -- The national anthem never sounded so beautiful.

With the teams standing side-by-side as "the rockets' red glare" echoed throughout Red Bull Arena, anything in that instant seemed possible.

For [Jhonny Arteaga](#) and his FC New York teammates, Tuesday night was the culmination of a season's worth of preparation in the lower leagues of American pro soccer and their chance to prove themselves against this country's equivalent of soccer royalty.

In the third round of the [Lamar Hunt](#) US Open Cup, the underdogs from the USL Pro [Select League](#) -- the third tier of American pro soccer -- faced the mighty Red Bulls of Major League Soccer.

The payrolls didn't matter. Who cared if [Thierry Henry](#) -- MLS's most recognizable and internationally acclaimed player, who won a World Cup and European Championship with France -- makes more in six games than the entire FCNY roster does in a season?

"Coming onto the pitch with the starting lineups was that moment when you realize, 'Alright we're here'," said Arteaga, 25, who graduated from [Westhill High School](#) before enjoying an All-American career at nearby [Dominican College](#).

His pro career has taken him from the U.S., to Poland, then Ecuador, and now home again in one more attempt to forge a lasting pro career. But despite their abilities, he and his teammates at FCNY may never achieve fame or fortune, making this game all the more important.

"What a feeling it was walking into a great stadium like Red Bull Arena," said Arteaga, who signed a short-term contract with FCNY, an expansion team from Queens, back in March. "But once we got here and stepped on the pitch, it's just 11 vs. 11."

Unfortunately for FCNY, shortly after taking a surprise second half lead following a scoreless first half, they surrendered two goals in a 10-minute span and the Red Bulls held on for a 2-1 win.

Arteaga, a striker, played all 90 minutes and had moments of success against the Red Bulls' U.S. men's national team member [Tim Ream](#) with nearly 50 of his family and closest friends at the stadium.

"It's a good feeling knowing that your family and close friends are supporting you, especially considering all I've been through over the past few years," said Arteaga, who earlier in the Cup scored a first-round hat trick against the Western Massachusetts Pioneers, the club that released him in 2008 when he was struggling for minutes straight out of college.

"But at end of the day, we're concerned with the job and it couldn't get done tonight. It's disappointing because we came out and played the first half well, got first goal, and then two little mistakes lost us the game. That's what an MLS team will do, punish you for mistakes."

For those that took the caravan from Stamford, whose cheers for Arteaga were audible throughout the stadium during the announcement of the starting lineups and at his every touch of the ball, success for one of their own means success for everyone.

"Him making it means that we all made it," said [Enzenio Mallozzi](#), the head coach of the [King School](#) boys team who played with Arteaga when they were kids and against him in the [Amateur Soccer League of CT](#).

"During that national anthem it was like we were on the field with him. We grew up together during a time when playing pro soccer didn't seem possible, and tonight some of our community's youngest kids had a chance to see one of our own at the highest level. His exposure means that type of success is something tangible for kids from Stamford in the future."

The Red Bulls, with only one win in 10 matches since April, had been decimated by injuries and further thinned by the loss of five key players away on International duty for the recent CONCACAF Gold Cup. As a result, their Swedish manager, [Hans Backe](#), was forced to employ a young lineup on Tuesday, consisting mostly of reserves.

"We scouted FCNY last weekend against Richmond, in their last game," said Backe, who got his first managerial job in Europe in 1982. "We had guys check their playing style, some key players, some set plays. So it was definitely a serious preparation for this game."

According to FCNY coach [Paul Shaw](#), the experience of playing against a MLS opponent was priceless, even if the result slipped away.

"For the club as a whole, considering we've only been in existence for six months or so, this game was great for us," Shaw said. "But what's been a problem for us is that when we score, we look vulnerable, and that happened tonight."

Shaw said that Arteaga has solidified himself as an integral part of the team, scoring five goals in 11 matches after beginning the season as an unused substitute.

"His development has been excellent. Now he's forced his way into the lineup and become an important part of the team, not just a bit part in the squad."