

# Gladiator News

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## Gladiators set to take on Fire

HERALD STAFF

One of Bradenton Gladiators coach Eddie Starling's biggest concerns after last week's 17-14 overtime victory against the Cape Coral Fear has been keeping his players on an even keel.

The Gladiators (4-3), who host the Fort Pierce Fire (3-4) at 7:05 p.m. today in a Southern States Football League game at the Police Athletic League Sports Complex, staged a jubilant celebration after Dominic Fragomeni's 36-yard field goal with 1 minute, 35 seconds remaining in the extra period.

Starling considered going for a first down because Fragomeni had missed two earlier attempts, the second after a bad snap. But Starling decided not to give up on the kicking game, and snapper Nate Kelly and holder Ken Burton did their jobs to enable Fragomeni to be a hero.

Starling is optimistic the Gladiators will return to earth in time to take the wind out of the Fire, who upset the East Coast Reapers 35-34 last week.

Bradenton has an outside chance of catching the St. Petersburg Sharks (6-1) for the AFC West Division title, but of more importance is keeping a stranglehold on second place, which would assure the Gladiators of at least one home playoff game.

"At this level of football, you've got to bring your 'A' game on every down and play consistent football for four quarters," Starling said. "We know we have to keep winning if we're going to get to the big dance in Orlando" (site of the April 30 SSFL Rice Bowl V championship).

Team president Edrick Sweeting will remain at quarterback at least one more week while Antonio Hale continues to rehabilitate from a knee injury. Sweeting's top targets include Mike Mills and Bon Bean, who scored on a 21-yard pass play against Cape Coral.

The Gladiators unveiled a new rushing threat against the Fear in fullback Torrye Shatteen, whose 65-yard run set up a 3-yard scoring run by James Shelley.

The running game was further enhanced when Starling moved former Palmetto High star Demetrius Craddock from the defensive secondary to running back. "He was a natural running back all through high school, so I threw my authority around and moved him to offense," Starling said.

Tickets are \$7 at the gate, \$5 if purchased from a Gladiators coach or player. Children 5 and under are admitted free. The PAL Sports Complex is located at 202 13th Ave. E.