

Tampa Bay Rowdies rookie makes impact with pro debut

By Bryan Burns, Times Staff Writer

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TAMPA — As far as professional debuts go, **Joe Donoho**'s was pretty special.

Donoho, a **Jesuit High** graduate, saw his first action during Friday's 2-1 win at Carolina, and in the 61st minute, the 6-foot-3 defender latched onto the end of midfielder Jeremy Christie's cross in the box to head in the Rowdies' first goal.

Donoho's defense against RailHawks left wing Gregory Richardson, one of the league's most dangerous attackers, was praised by Rowdies coach Paul Dalglish. And to top it off, **Donoho** celebrated his 25th birthday two days later. "I couldn't really have drawn it up any better," he said.

Donoho was born in Anchorage, Alaska, and moved to the bay area when he was 3. He lived in Brandon until the sixth grade, then moved to South Tampa and attended **Jesuit**. He never suited up for the **Tigers**' acclaimed soccer team. He chose to play basketball — soccer and basketball play in the winter — and ended up a standout.

Through his club soccer team, the Tampa Bay Kickers, **Donoho** earned a scholarship to Rutgers. He also had a preferred walk-on invitation to join the Scarlet Knights basketball team and basketball offers from lower-level schools.

Donoho thought about playing both sports at Rutgers because the college soccer and basketball seasons — essentially fall and winter, respectively — have only a small overlap.

"I was really burnt out after one season of soccer and couldn't see myself playing both sports," **Donoho** said.

Donoho transferred to Bradley during his junior year and finished his collegiate career with the Braves.