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TOP STORY SPOTLIGHT

Legacy beats Bismarck for first girls soccer win of season

Josh Dungan

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Legacy's Chelsea Olheiser (14) celebrates with her teammates after scoring the lone goal of Tuesday's match against Bismarck. TANNER ECKER, TRIBUNE

Josh Dungan

Playing girls soccer in North Dakota's wind patterns can cause some interesting results.

In a game where Bismarck maintained possession for more than two-thirds of the 80-minute game clock, it was Legacy that found the only scoring play of the game.

Cutting through the gusting winds in the first half at the Sanford Sports Complex, the Sabers tallied in the final four-plus minutes to secure their first win of the girls soccer season in four tries, 1-0.

"The first half, we struggled possessing the ball and combining passes, we'd worked on that this week and we knew the first half would be a mess with the wind," Legacy head coach Mick Lenhardt said. "I thought we played well the last five minutes when we got our goal in the first half, we started to build, drive a little bit, started off the second half better, but then it was still mostly them and we need to keep working on things this year."

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As has happened in Legacy's first two games of the season, possession -- and the offensive production that comes with it -- has not been in their favor.

Doubly so when the wind was gusting in Bismarck's favor in the first half, as Legacy had to put major effort into any and all zone clears resulting from a multitude of Bismarck shot attempts, most of which either went wide of the net for a goal kick or into the arms of Legacy keeper Berlynn Felchle.

"Bismarck did a good job of keeping (the ball) on our end," Lenhardt said. "During our losses to Century and Minot North, we've played well, those first halves were 0-0. Stats haven't looked good but defensively we've played well.

When Bismarck was able to build their chances, the Demons turned them into seven shots on net and two corner kicks in the first half alone.

But a solid understanding of Bismarck's attacking patterns meant Legacy was able to form a shell around the net and despite a few scrums in the goalie box and one play Bismarck sorely wants back after Felchle was out of position, the Sabers were able to escape the Demons' high-possession play without allowing a goal.

"We figured if we could weather the first half and get a goal, we could have some success in the second half," Lenhardt said. "We didn't, but we were able to take pressure off Berlynn more in the second half.

"Berlynn has played out of her mind this year, she's made some phenomenal saves. Tonight it was mostly under control, there was one (play) in the first half where she got out a little bit and Bismarck chipped it with the wind that was sketchy, but I felt pretty good that anything they were shooting from the outside she'd make the save on."

Managing just a single counter-attack before the play that led to their goal, Legacy finally broke upfield with eyes on the Bismarck net.

Lila Healy put the ball on a tee for Chelsea Olheiser's push to the net, and Olheiser lined a shot past Bismarck keeper Gabby Bruer for the only tally of the game with 4:07 left before half.

"We were telling the girls, into the wind, you have to play the ball quick, you have to get it off your feet," Lenhardt said. "Lila played a perfect ball, Chelsea made a great run, and we've worked all year on shooting the ball low and into the corner and Chelsea buried it exactly where she needed to."

The wind played havoc on both teams in the second half.

Bismarck was able to do nothing with their five second-half corner kicks and Felchle had a relatively easy time stopping both of their two shots on frame.

Legacy managed to put a little more offensive pressure on net in the second half, recording their only corner of the game about halfway through the second half and putting two more shots on frame, but Bruer made a pair of stops to keep the game 1-0.

"Going the full length of the field, without the wind, that's tough, especially when you're tired," Lenhardt said. "We wanted to make sure we were still combining passes and not just playing through balls and long balls, because they'd blow out, we saw that in the first half."

The Demons (0-2-1 WDA, 1 point, 0-3-1 overall) will continue their search for their first goal of the season on Thursday at Williston (7:30 p.m.) and Saturday at Minot North (2 p.m.)

After snapping a three-game losing streak to open the season, Legacy (1-2-0 WDA, three points, 1-3-0 overall) will have its work cut out for them to try and make a winning streak when they host Mandan at 8 p.m. on Thursday.

"Mandan will be a challenge. They're the defending state champions," Lenhardt said. "We'll have our work cut out, but you play the sport to compete with the challenges in front of you."

Legacy 1, Bismarck 0

Bismarck;0;0;--;0

Legacy;1;0;--;1

First half: 1. Leg, Chelsea Olheiser (Lila Healy), 35:53.

Second half: No scoring.

Goalkeeper saves: Bismarck -- Gabby Bruer 0-2--2. Legacy -- Berlynn Felchle 7-2--9.

Corner kicks: Bismarck 5-2--7. Legacy 0-1--1.

Records: Legacy 1-2-0 West Region for three points, 1-3-0 overall; Bismarck 0-2-1 West Region for one point, 0-3-1 overall.

By Josh Dungan

Sports Reporter
