

Baca's 74th Minute Strike Makes Difference As Edwardsville Defeats Collinsville 1-0 In First Girls Soccer Match In Nearly Two Years

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Olivia Baca scored the match's only goal in the 74th minutes as Edwardsville defeated Collinsville 1-0 in a Southwestern Conference girls soccer match - vthe first one played by both the Tigers and Kahoks in nearly two years - Tuesday evening at Tiger Stadium.

The start of the COVID-19 Pandemic forced the Illinois High School Association to cancel the spring 2020 sporting seasons, including girls soccer, and both sides were were very glad to return to the pitch and finally be able to play after the long layoff.

"Oh, year, we're thrilled to be back," said Edwardsville head coach Abby Federmann. "It was a little bit expedited, we had trials last week, now we had Collinsville today, so it was a little bit adjusting on the fly. I knew that I had a core group of girls in (Payton) Federmann, (Brinn) Miracle, (Anna) Erber, and Baca, and I just needed to make sure I could work with those group of girls and everybody supporting them as efficiently as possible. And I think it worked. Baca didn't get to play last year, because she was a sophomore. I knew she was going to be an asset to us and make a huge impact, and today, she came in clutch."

Baca's strike was indeed a thing of beauty, as she hit a shot that beat Kahoks goalie Jenna Feldmann to the far post and into the back of the net.

"She broke off of her defender in the middle," Federmann said, "and Federmann had an outstanding ball to her, and it was a perfect shot. But she broke off her defender in the middle of the field so that Federmann could get her the ball. I knew if she got the opportunity to be open with a clear shot, she was going to put in in the back of the net."

Which Baca did indeed do. And everyone in the Tigers' lineup played very well, which very much pleased Federmann.

"They gave me 100 percent," Federmann said, "they played well. They are learning how to play with each other, and they were able to adapt quickly to each other. I'm impressed, I put people in all kinds of all kinds of different positions at all kinds of different times, and they were able to adapt to what my crazy is," she said with a laugh. "I had to use this game, as intense as it is, it being Collinsville, I had to use this game to see what I had. Now I have a better idea of it, and moving forward, hopefully, we can just build on it."

Federmann had two of the first good chances of the match, almost stealing the ball from Feldmann in the third minutes, but couldn't get a good shot off, then in the 10th minute, had a good chance, but the ball was covered up by Feldmann. In the 15th minute, Collinsville had its first good opportunity off a free kick outside the box, with Maria Voss hitting a good shot, but Kaitlyn Naney was there to spoil the shot and keep the match scoreless.

The Tigers had the better of the play in the first half, and had two good chances, one in the 19th minute from Baca in the box, and another after 25 minutes with Jaydn Renth breaking in after a nice spin move to get away from a defender, but both chances went wide. One minute later, Miracle was all alone, but her initial shot was stopped by Feldmann, and the rebound was shot across the face of the goal wide, keeping the match without a goal.

Miracle sent a brilliant cross in at the half-hour, but no one could connect with the pass, and in the final 10 minutes of the first half, both teams had excellent opportunities, but couldn't find the back of the net as the first half ended 0-0.

The Kahoks' Sarah Henze had the first great chance of the second half when her shot went high off the football goalpost in the 43rd minute, and another Collinsville opportunity was broken up on a great tackle by Campbell Slemmer in the 48th minute. The chances continued as play began to get physical, and in the 66th minute,

Collinsville's Megan Jeremias was booked after she slid into Naney going for a ball that the Tigers' keeper covered up. The play continued to get physical in the final minutes as both teams looked for a winner.

It came in the 74th minute when Federmann fed Baca with a brilliant pass, and Baca let loose with a shot that beat Feldman to the far post and into the net to give the Tigers a 1-0 lead. The Tigers' defense then clamped down and didn't allow a good chance for the Kahoks to equalize as the clock ran out to give Edwardsville all three points.

The Tigers are 1-0-0 to start the season and host O'Fallon in another conference match on Thursday night, with the kickoff coming at 6:45 p.m. Federmann is very excited that her team has returned to the pitch, and is hoping for many good things to happen in 2021.

"You know what? I'm hoping to get these girls as much time on the pitch as possible," Federmann said. "They earned it, that having a year off of high school soccer. I want to have fun, I want these seniors to enjoy their last season, I want to win some games and I would like to get deep into the postseason. But first and foremost, I just want these girls to get out here and play the game that they love, that they so deserve to play and haven't been able to play in a year."







[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)