

Triad Edged By Fort Zumwalt South In Battle Of Two-Time Defending State Champs

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
March 23 2023 8:58 AM



TROY - It seems like every time the Triad Lady Knights take their home field, it's one of the more antiquated games in the St. Louis region.

That was again the case Wednesday night as the two-time IHSA Class 2A state champs hosted the Fort Zumwalt South Bulldogs, a team from St. Peters, Mo. that won the MSHSAA Class 3 state title in back-to-back seasons.

Heading into last night's game, the teams combined for a 97-4-1 record the last two seasons.

The Bulldogs scored a second-half goal to win the game 1-0.

So, what was Wednesday's game actually like?

Both coaches would agree that it started sloppily for the two teams' prowess.

The teams fought for possession with neither team having long stretches of it in the first half. It led to a scoreless first 40 minutes of play.

The best chance in the first half came in the 36th minute when FZS hit a whipping shot forcing Triad freshman keeper Payton Hartman to come up with a good save.

Hartman had to make 10 saves on the night to keep her team in it.

The second half opened with a bang. Fort Zumwalt South junior Ashley Miller scored in the 42nd minute to give her team the lead after rifling a shot over Hartman who couldn't do much about it.

The goal went on to be the game-winner.

The Knights had a good chance five minutes later when a low-driven cross was put across the six-yard box but Zumwalt South senior goalkeeper Ally Moore rushed out and punched the ball away.

Fort Zumwalt South pressed on forcing Hartman to make another good save in the 56th minute. A few minutes later FZS senior Isabel Montileone had a shot just go wide.

The Knights never rolled over. They started to pass the ball better and find some open lanes. The pressure led to four straight corner kicks, each of them having a little sting on them but to no success.

Triad's best chance of the second half came from another corner kick a few minutes later. A well-placed cross went off the head of senior midfielder Laney Harshany and just went over the crossbar. That chance came in the 77th minute and was really Triad's last gasp.

Some determined Fort Zumwalt South defending got the job done to pick up their first shutout of the season and improve to 2-1 on the season.

Triad falls to 1-3. After the last two seasons, Triad had a record of 49-1-1. This is a team that is not used to losing. The Knights fell to O'Fallon (6-0) and Rochester (3-0) to open the season. The last time Triad lost back-to-back games was in the 2016-17 season.

"Over here, we're still scratching heads," Triad head coach Matt Bettlach said postgame.

"These girls have to learn from adversity. The teams that we've played so far have really tested us and I think the girls realize that it's going to take a lot more than just showing up to win games. We just have to keep going, there's nothing we can do but keep moving," Bettlach said.

Moving forward, Triad's schedule doesn't get any easier. They host the undefeated Alton Redbirds on Saturday at 12:30 p.m. before going to Granite City. Then they continue Mississippi Valley play against Mascoutah and the only team to beat them last year, Waterloo.

Not to mention a game against another defending state champ, Matea Valley at noon on April 8.

Still, the Knights aren't looking down on themselves and will continue on.

"This is a good group of kids," Bettlach added. "They've got the heart, they've got the desire. I know they're going to work, it's just a matter of us executing better."