

# **Roller Coaster Season Continues For Triad – Knights Focused On “Second Week Of May”**

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TROY – It was yet another one of those highly-anticipated matchups at Triad High School Saturday afternoon. These things happen when two IHSA defending state champs lock up.

The defending two-time Class 2A state champs, Triad Knights, hosted the defending Class 3A state champs, Metea Valley Mustangs. It was the Mustangs who came out the other side with a 3-1 win.

Metea Valley came into the match undefeated and remained that way as they improved to 6-0-2. As of the latest Max Preps ranking from April 6, the Mustangs are ranked No. 14 in the state but will surely move up those rankings after a win at No. 8 ranked Granite City the night before and now a win over another past state champ.

“They’re good,” Triad head coach Matt Bettlach said about his state-ranked opposition Saturday afternoon. “They had a lot of talent and they pressured us all over the field. That’s a good Metea Valley team and we were fortunate to hang with them.”



Both teams started off hot, but it was the Mustangs who struck first. Metea Valley's speedy forward Tyra King scored in the 9<sup>th</sup> minute after her low-driven shot went off the left post and in. The goal kind of came out of nowhere as she burst past a Triad defender and let the shot go past the Knights' goalkeeper.

The goal seemed to stun the Knights. They couldn't immediately regroup, and the Mustangs went in for the old one-two punch. Two minutes later Lucy Burk doubled Metea Valley's lead.

That goal woke up Triad. They punched right back. In the 13<sup>th</sup> minute, Caty Burton's shot from about 25 yards out soared over the Metea Valley keeper, Alyssa Gluting's head, and into the net to make it 2-1.

Triad did use that momentum to have another great chance in the 19<sup>th</sup> minute when Gabbie Wood tried to curl a right-footed shot toward the back post, but Gluting was there to push it wide, making her best save of the game.

The Mustangs made it 3-1 in the 28<sup>th</sup> minute when Lily Senese smashed home a ball across the Triad six-yard box. That would be the final blow as the game finished up 3-1, with no more goals coming in the second half.

"I thought the first half, we were very happy with our play," Bettlach said.

"We were unfortunate to be down 3-1. The three mistakes in the back cost us, but we were overall happy with our play. We moved the ball around really well, had a couple of nice looks at goal, and then the second half was kind of the complete opposite. They looked like a second-half team and we didn't. We weren't able to build off of any momentum we had in the first half, but that's credit to them," Bettlach added.





As the title suggests, the roller coaster season continues for the Knights, a team that hasn't been able to string together back-to-back wins thus far. This game was played on the back of a 4-0 Mississippi Valley Conference win over a quality Civic Memorial team.

Bettlach amounts his team's up-and-down season to the opposition that they have played.

Game one of the season was a 6-0 loss to the now No. 1 ranked team in Illinois, O'Fallon, a Class 3A juggernaut. A 1-0 loss to a defending Missouri state champion Fort Zumwalt South, a 4-1 loss to the aforementioned No. 8 ranked Granite City, a 1-0 loss to MVC rival Waterloo (the only team to best Triad last season), and now a 3-1 loss to Metea Valley.

It's not an excuse, Triad's schedule is hard, and it's built that way on purpose.

Bettlach has mentioned multiple times that everything his team is going through right now is preparing them for May.

So, that's why when teams like Fort Zumwalt South and Metea Valley ask to play them, Bettlach agrees.

That's why the Mustangs came down from Aurora as well, to toughen their schedule.

"We like to get out of town, we like to travel, we like to come see teams that aren't in our area, different teams that give us different levels of competition, and so far, so good," Metea Valley head coach Chris Whaley said the night before following a 2-1 win over Granite City.

"We always like to come down and see different teams. Downstate Illinois teams, we saw one last year in Edwardsville, and it's just kind of a mystery unless you actually come to see them and get to know them," Whaley added.

The Mustangs beat the Tigers 2-0 in the Class 3A Super-Sectionals en route to their state title.

Metea Valley would come down the past few seasons and play in the Parkway Showcase where they'd matchup against some St. Louis powerhouses, but that tournament has since disbanded.

Whaley still wanted to come downstate, so he called Granite City and Triad and played two games within 24 hours.



“They reached out to us,” Bettlach said.

“They said that they wanted to come down and still play kind of as a team bonding thing, and since they were already playing Granite, they figured why not give us a call. We were happy to do it, happy to oblige.”

It set up what some saw as a dream game pinning two defending state champs against one another and it delivered, just not the result the Knights were looking for.

Something else this tough schedule does is prepare the Knights for their own grueling conference schedule. The Knights may sit at 4-6 on the season but they’re still 3-1 in the MVC.

“Conference is solid this year, everybody’s got talent, good teams, and we still have to see everyone one more time. It’s going to be down to the wire, but it’s going to be fun,” Bettlach said.

It doesn’t get any easier this upcoming week with more non-conference games against Cor Jesu and Althoff on the schedule.

“We need to find a way against a good team. This only makes us stronger. It may expose our weaknesses, but as long as we can get it figured out by the second week of May, I’m okay with this,” Bettlach added.

“I know our record is not where everybody wants it to be, but as long as we’re on a roll by the second week of May, I don’t care about what happened in the regular season, I care about what happens in the postseason.”