

Baca Scores Twice As Edwardsville Kicks Past Triad Knights

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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TROY – On a cold, windy morning at Triad High School, the Knights hosted the Edwardsville Tigers in a non-conference girl's soccer game.

The Tigers scored two goals in each half as they went on to a 4-2 win to improve to 9-3 on the season. The result brings Triad down to 6-7-2.

In this game, Edwardsville started out as the better team and put lots of pressure on early. Sophomore midfielder Olivia Lautz's shot barely went high in the 7th minute. Triad's first real shot came in the 19th minute, but it went wide.

The Tigers grabbed the lead in the 27th minute when they connected on a header from a set piece. It seemed as if it may have been an own goal by the Knights' defense, but the shot was deemed to have gone off the head of senior forward Olivia Baca to make it 1-0.

The lead was quickly doubled when freshman midfielder Thea Dimitroff hit a rocket of a shot from about 30 yards out. The ball bounced off the crossbar but had enough backspin, and a little help from the wind, to trickle across the goal line and make it 2-0 heading into halftime.

Edwardsville kept its foot on the gas to kick open the second half when Baca made it 3-0 in the 43rd minute. Undoubtedly the goal of the game, she let a left-footed shot go from a rather poor angle that soared into the far upper corner.

Despite being three ahead, Edwardsville head coach Abby Federmann knew that no lead was safe against the Knights.

Triad's a team that will never stop, and I think that we were thinking maybe they would," she said.

The Knights never gave up, and it led to a goal.

Junior midfielder Hannah Sparks dribbled the ball from right around half-field with a defender on her shoulder the whole way. She made a move and got just enough separation to let a shot off that found the back of the net to cut the deficit to 3-1.

"We couldn't find a way in the first half to get anything going in the offensive third," Triad head coach Matt Bettlach said.

"In the second half, I think the girls came out with some good pressure, you know, we get that goal, make it 3-1, and have some confidence."

Though confident, they were still facing a relentless Tigers offense that had one more goal in them.

In the 64th minute, junior midfielder Kylie Peel scored from 25 yards out or so.

It was Triad with the last-ditch effort in the 75th minute that came off a bad mistake from Edwardsville. Goalie at the time, senior Lainey Weigers, ran out to the edge of her 18-yard box to pick up a routine rolling ball. She unfortunately picked the ball up right outside the box, resulting in a handball.

In the midst of confusion, Edwardsville never really got its defensive wall set, and Triad's senior defender Alexa Holley stepped up scoring on the unguarded near-post with a right-footed effort to make it 4-2.

For coach Federmann, she's holding her team to a bit of a higher standard than Saturday's performance.

"We're getting to the point of the season where I need everybody to be playing up," she said.

"Today was an opportunity, up 3-0, to put some people in different places and see some things, and I wasn't happy with that."

After a busy week, she was hoping to be able to give some starters a little rest, but she never had the opportunity to do so.

"We still obviously have things to work on. We're battling some injuries, my back line's a little hurt. We're coming off five games, and then have five games next week. Our preparation for next week is to beat Alton."

The Tigers and Redbirds (8-3-1) square off on Thursday in Alton with a 7 p.m. scheduled kick-off.

For Bettlach and Triad, this game was kind of a tale of two halves.

"I thought our girls responded well," he said.

"I didn't want them to feel like, 'Oh no, here we go again.' They battled. I thought they had the better play majority of the game but I felt like in the second, the girls responded."

"I was pleased, I thought the girls battled well. That's a good team, they're fast, they're physical, they're very skilled, and I think our girls defended well today."

At least one of Edwardsville's goals was the result of an untimely turnover from the Knights, something Bettlach says his team is still suffering from.

“I felt like we had too many turnovers today, and that’s kind of been our Achilles heel all year,” he said.

“Against the teams that put the pressure on us, and the teams that are skilled, they just force us to make mistakes that cost us, and that was evident today.”

“That was the message after the game. I think we were kind of our own worst enemy today.”

Triad has a couple of tough Mississippi Valley Conference games upcoming. The Knights will play at Mascoutah (2-9) on Tuesday then host Waterloo (9-2-1) on Thursday, both games with 5:45 p.m. start times.

The Tigers play at Althoff Catholic (10-5-2) and at Alton on Thursday before heading to a tournament in Iowa.