

Hogan, Hatfield Each Score Twice As Warriors Beat Alton In "Playoff Test"

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON - Tuesday evening began a tough week for the Alton High School girl's soccer team. The Redbirds host Granite City (9-2) on Tuesday, Edwardsville (10-3) on Thursday, and Civic Memorial (12-4) on Friday.

That's why when the Warriors' Emma Hogan made a dazzling run and broke the tie in just the 5th minute, Alton head coach Gwen Sabo thought she might have been in for a long night.

"I'm never happy when we lose, but truthfully it could have been a lot worse," she said.

Sabo had her senior goalie Peyton Baker to thank, and she did so after the first whistle blew.

"Literally, the first thing I said at halftime is 'Thank you Peyton'. It was 2-1, but could've easily been three, four, five. Peyton really saved us in the first half," Sabo said.

After Hogan's opening goal, she quickly doubled the lead inside 20 minutes.

Usually playing out wide according to Granite City head coach Ken Prazma, Hogan was playing up top for the Warriors Tuesday night, scoring her third and fourth goals of the season.

"Emmie Hogan played a great game," Prazma said.

He would've liked to see a shutout, but the Redbirds would make it a game heading into halftime.

Jada Bruce scored her first goal of the season to cut into the deficit, Sabo saying that the goal couldn't have come at a better time, in the game, and in the season.

With a little bit of momentum, Alton played it's best soccer the first 15 minutes of the second half, until an unfortunate mistake.

In the 54th minute, Granite City was awarded a penalty kick after a handball inside the box. Peyton Hattfield confidently stepped up to take and scored on the right side with Baker guessing the other way.

Alton still had its chances to try and draw level. The dangerous Emily Baker had some shots just barely go wide and Lyndsey Miller nearly converted on a header from Baker's cross, but it wasn't meant to be for the Redbirds.

With time winding down, the ball landed at Hattfield's feet again in the 79th minute. She hit a soaring half volley from at least 30 yards out that miraculously found its way over Baker's head and into the back of the net for 4-1.

Hattfield also had an assist on one of Hogan's first half goals. Ella Hickam and Savanhna Khammanyvong also had helpers.



Postgame, Sabo wasn't all that disappointed in her team's efforts, but knows there are things to clean up defensively.

"We played much better in the second half," she said.

"First half, really frustrating, we give up a goal in the first five minutes. Terrible way , sets the tone of the game."

"Overall, our one vs. one defending was horrendous tonight; we looked like cones out there," Sabo continued.

The result is Alton's third straight loss as the Redbirds fall to 8-5-1 on the season.

This was Granite's first game in 10 days since suffering a 2-1 loss to a then undefeated St. Joseph's Academy team from St. Louis.

"I did like the way the girls played," Prazma said Tuesday night.

"They kept the intensity up. It was a good, hard-fought game. Luckily, we came out on top."

Prazma mentioned that this was the last game both these teams play before playoff seeding.

All speculation, but it can be assumed that O'Fallon (11-0-1) has the No. 1 seed locked up, with the Warriors a good candidate for the No. 2. Alton finds itself fighting Edwardsville and Quincy (9-2-3) for a No. 3 seed in their respected sub-sectional.

No matter what happens, it's going to be a battle just to make it out of the regional, let alone the sectional for all teams involved.

"This is like a mini playoff test," Sabo said Tuesday night after the Granite City game.

Both teams will have playoff tests coming up again this week when Alton hosts Edwardsville at Public School Stadium on Thursday and Granite heads to unbeaten O'Fallon on Saturday.