

Edwardsville Girls Soccer Secures Gritty 2-1 Victory Over Triad

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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EDWARDSVILLE – It wasn't the season-opening game that Edwardsville was expecting, but it was the opening result the Tigers had hoped for.

When EHS girls soccer head coach Abby Federmann was asked if she liked opening the season against a tough team like Triad, she had a simple answer.

“No,” she said with a big laugh. “It’s frustrating because we would have had Mascoutah yesterday, but it got canceled of course.”

The Tigers were hoping for a “warm-up” game of sorts before hosting the Knights Friday night, but that wasn’t the case. Regardless, the Tigers were able to open the year with a 2-1 win against a Triad team with a lot of new faces.

Despite a roster with 11 underclassmen on it, the Knights were the ones to take the lead.

After a couple of early chances from the Tigers, Triad found the back of the net first in the 13th minute when London Looby’s shot from distance went off the crossbar and in.

The Tigers had more opportunities to close out the half, forcing Triad’s goalkeeper Cloe Graumenz into some saves, but Triad led 1-0 at halftime.

In the first 40 minutes, Triad simply outworked Edwardsville.

“That kind of what we talked about at half,” Federmann said. “We just had to show a little more grit. Triad’s always going to come out hard and they’re always going to work as hard as possible. Sometimes at the beginning of our seasons, we go in a little bit lazy. It’s frustrating because there’s so much talent, we needed to match effort.”

“That’s what we talked about at halftime is to match their effort and you should come out on top; that’s what they did,” Federmann continued. “They got gritty, worked a little bit harder, and communicated a little bit better.”

It all culminated with a game-tying goal in the 56th minute.

Edwardsville, looking like a totally different team after halftime, was working the ball better and giving Triad’s defense some trouble.

Ava Leitschuh and Mea Hook were credited with assists for Ellie Neath’s goal that tied the game at 1-1 just 16 minutes into the second half.

Not much later Kylie Peel drilled the crossbar on a direct free kick from about 40 yards out.

From then on out, Triad was trying to survive the Tigers’ onslaught.

Finally, in the 75th minute, Hook took a ball from Metro-East Lutheran transfer Kate Jose and buried it in the bottom right corner.

Hook's shot hit the inside of the post and came back out, which confused the officials at first, but they then determined it went in and came back out in a blink-and-you'll-miss-it moment.

The Tigers knew that it was going to be a tough task without last year's leading goal scorer Olivia Baca. She scored a team-high 27 goals and had 11 assists in her senior season. She now plays Division I soccer for Xavier.

"It's like this. Do I have a 26-goal scorer on the team? No. But I've got multiple girls who can score multiple goals," Federmann said.

"So, it's a matter of spreading it out and everybody doing a little bit more to make up for those goals. I never thought we'd have a problem scoring."

That's because the team does return three other big contributors in Peel (10 goals, 5 assists), Thea Dimitroff (nine goals, 12 assists), and Hook (seven goals, nine assists). Jose scored 30 goals last season as a junior at MEL, so she knows how to score as well.

Edwardsville opens the season at 1-0, while the Knights fall to 0-2 after Tuesday night's 1-0 loss to defending IHSA Class 3A state champions O'Fallon.

"I thought in both games the girls played hard, played well," Triad head coach Matt Bettlach said.

"Two very good teams right off the bat that can play. Two programs ranked highly in the state with rich history. To come here and go up 1-0, I thought we were playing well. But, they took it to us and I thought defensively we held our own."

Bettlach said that his team struggled to keep up with the Tigers in the second half.

"They took it to us," he said. "For whatever reason, we couldn't connect a lot through our midfield and they kind of broke us down. They were making runs in behind us, we weren't staying with, and it was tough for us."

Bettlach wouldn't want the opening of the season against anyone else though.

"Overall, first two games, I'm happy because of who we played against. Losing is not fun, but we can learn from these. We want to see where we're at, we want to see who we can compete with," Bettlach said.

Federmann agreed with the sentiment that playing these Metro Cup games only makes them better.

“It doesn’t matter if Triad has numbers or doesn’t, they’re always going to be competitive and it’s always such a heated game,” she said. “The girls all know each other. It’s a very hard game to open up with, but it’s going to make team better and my team better as the season goes on.”