

Girls' Soccer Wins Senior Night Matchup

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Kayla Smith edges out her Upper Moreland opponent for a header in the senior night game played last Thursday at home.

Smith scored three goals in the game.

A freshman stole the show on senior night as the Upper Perkiomen girls' soccer team prepped for the PIAA playoffs with a 5-1 win over Upper Moreland in a non-league game last Thursday evening.

After the team's eight seniors were honored before the game, Kayla Smith tallied three goals on a windy, chilly night on Tribe Field to boost the Tribe (9-9-1) to the win.

Senior Gabie Lent gave the home team an early 1-0 lead after a nice setup from fellow senior Kaylin Umstead who kept the ball in along the end line and fed Lent in front at 5:50.

Smith was a dominant presence from the opening kick and finally notched her first score of the game at 19:12 to make it 2-0. Eight and a half minutes later, Smith took a pass from Raychel Bair, another impressive freshman, and ripped a shot at Upper Moreland keeper Leslie Weaver who made the initial save. But the ball bounced back to Smith who tucked the rebound behind Weaver for a 3-0 lead.

The defense, led by seniors Becca Burkhart, Lauren Licata, and Marissa Dardozzi and junior Julie Lavin, put up an impenetrable wall in front of keeper Liz Keegan until Brandi Weaver managed to loft the ball high into the net near the end of the first half to cut the lead to 3-1 at intermission.

Smith completed her hat trick at 44:56 with a nice header off a pass from Lent after Umstead had smartly set up the scoring chance.

The ninth-grader finished the regular season with 13 goals and nine assists and had a huge impact on the offense.

"We scored 37 goals on the season, which means she played a role in almost 60 percent of our goals, which is pretty impressive stat no matter what grade you are in," said coach Mike Freed. "I also think she opened up space for our other forwards and meshed very well with Kaylin (Umstead), considering they had never played together before August."

Junior Jordan Rowles completed the scoring with a floater into the back of the net at 75:18.

Even though it was a "friendly," the game had some significance in the district seeding process.

"It was a game that we felt was important to win if we wanted a home game for the district playoffs," said Freed.

That mission was accomplished when the team got to host Harriton last night in the first round of the AA classification for a fresh start on a second season.

This fall, the team got off to a slow start and had an up and down regular season. "The first two games of the year (a 1-0 loss to Mt. St. Joseph and a 3-2 loss to Phoenixville) were the ones I'd like to have back," said Freed.

The Tribe did make the PAC-10 Final Four but fell to traditional nemesis Owen J. Roberts.

Freed had high praise for his seniors, especially Keegan.

"All eight of them have been important to our success. Liz had a terrific year in goal. Last year she had massive shoes to fill, replacing (Emily) Cota, and she probably felt some pressure from that. This year you could count on her to consistently make big saves game after game."

Unlike last season, the coach could point to the fact that the team stayed relatively healthy this year with a season-ending injury to Jacinta Fresco the exception. "It makes a huge difference when you can keep players with experience on the field."

As for the playoffs, "We've benefitted from the PIAA re-structuring that now has three classifications in girls' soccer, and we're excited about the opportunity to participate in the district playoffs, especially by hosting," he said.