

Louisburg falls in physical match with Piper



Louisburg junior Bree Gassman goes up for a header Thursday against Piper at the Wildcat Soccer Complex.

Going up against one of the top teams in Class 5A, the Louisburg girls soccer team knew it was going to have one of its biggest tests of the season.

The Wildcats hosted Piper on Thursday, and for the first half, the Pirates looked like the better team as they ran out to a 2-goal lead at halftime.

Louisburg picked its game up to a different level in the second half as the Wildcats scored to cut the Piper lead in half, but the Pirates were able to hang on and hand Louisburg a 2-1 defeat.

Physical play was the focus early for Piper as the Pirates controlled play, but the Wildcats matched that physicality in the second half in what was a rough-and-tumble affair.

“I felt the game got extremely physical,” Louisburg coach Kyle Conley said. “Play was let go and the players adjusted. Unfortunately, the game got out of control. We knew they were going to be a physical team, but I never saw much like that on the girls side. We got down 2-0 and at halftime we talked about which team is going to come out and play. We asked if the girls were going to back down to this type of play or rise to the challenge.”

"We knew Piper was going to shoot a lot, but the majority of them didn't hurt us at all because they lacked being in dangerous positions. We did come out really flat and struggled to find and stay with our marks. The second half, was a much different story. We took the game to them and created a massive amount of dangerous chances. We just couldn't find the net for the second goal."

Piper's Sierra Montez and Ryann Clark scored the two Pirate goals in the first half. Montez was also difficult to stay in front of as she had five shots on target and 15 shots for the match.

The Wildcats (6-2) came out strong in the second half and put the pressure on the Pirate defense. All the pressure eventually led to a Lexi Hampton goal with 19 minutes left in the game to make it 2-1.

"2-0 is the worst lead in soccer because if the team trailing scores, they get all the momentum," Conley said. "I felt our girls rose to the challenge and then took the game to them. We matched their physicality and created a lot of dangerous opportunities. It was a good game for us to rise up from and see what we were truly made of. I think this game showed that we can play that style of game."

Louisburg put together several different runs in the half that nearly led to some dangerous opportunities. Sophomore Lola Edwards had two shots on goal in the second half and junior Bree Gassman had the other.



Louisburg freshman Evyn Richardson clears the ball out of the back Thursday against Piper.

Defensively, the Wildcats also played tougher as Piper had just two shots on target in the second half as senior goalie Sierra Hahn had eight saves on the night.

The back line of Brianne Kuhlman, Ruth Minster, Evyn Richardson, Sammy McDaniel, along with midfielders Hailey Sword and Adyson Ross, limited Piper's chances in the final 40 minutes.

Despite the loss, the Wildcats plan to use this as a growing opportunity.

"Our girls mental toughness is what stood out the most," Conley said. "We played alright, but we didn't back down. I was proud of our battle and how hard we played. We will learn from this game and get better. Our passing in the final third would have helped tremendously. The girls didn't back down and played really, really hard."

Louisburg will try and bounce back Thursday when it travels to

Baldwin. Varsity is set to begin at 4 p.m.