

Bismarck, Legacy play to draw

Sabers held without a goal for first time this season

MIKE KRAFT - Bismarck Tribune

It goes down in the record books as a tie, but it certainly felt like a victory for Bismarck. The Demons did what no other team has managed to do so far this season: keep Legacy off the scoreboard. Bismarck's defensive effort resulted in a hard-fought 0-0 tie on Saturday at Sanford Sports Complex, giving the Demons a much-needed point in the West Region standings.

"It's a good result for us considering our past results," Bismarck coach Ricardo Pierre-Louis said. "We saw a different team today. Our players were very focused within the tactical concepts and we had a lot of effort and we were smarter throughout the game. We'd take the win, but a tie is a good result for us."

Quality scoring chances were hard to come by, especially in the first half as neither team recorded a shot on goal. The best chance came from a rocket off the leg of Bismarck's Logan Reuschlein in the seventh minute. The senior midfielder launched a shot from 25 yards out that ricocheted off the crossbar over the outstretched hand of Legacy goalkeeper Nate Olheiser. "I just won the ball and picked my head up and saw a lot of space," Reuschlein said. "I figured I might as well shoot it and it almost went in. I just knew I had to hit it really hard."

The Sabers (8-1-2 overall, 7-1-2 West Region) had a pair of chances late in the opening 40 minutes, both generated by senior Ben McDonald. His first scoring attempt saw him slip by Bismarck goalkeeper Tate Schaner, who came out of his net to block off the angle. McDonald was able to get around him, but couldn't control the ball before it narrowly crossed the end line, resulting in a goal kick. Less than two minutes later, McDonald placed a shot from inside the box just a foot over the crossbar. McDonald was coming off a four-goal performance in a 10-0 victory over Williston on Thursday. He entered the match with the team lead in goals with nine alongside Uriel Rivera, who missed Saturday's match due to injury. Rivera is one of several Sabers nursing injuries, but coach Tom Marcis isn't using that as an excuse for the team's performance. "This is a team game," Marcis said. "Yes, somebody's injured but everyone else has to step up. Next man up is very important. Yeah, we have to adjust where people are playing, but one of the things we talk about is you're a soccer player, so maybe you're used to playing on the outside but now you have to play on the inside or maybe you're used to playing up front and now you have to play back. If you're a soccer player you adjust and play where the team needs you. That's not an excuse. We just need to execute no matter who's in what position."

Those injuries have forced Olheiser back in between the posts the past couple games after spending time on the field as a defender. "Nate is a first-team all-state player,"

Marcis said. "We've had to make some adjustments. We have had some injuries so the last two games he was out of the goal and then our next keeper had a knee injury so Nate had to go back in the goal. It's been a lot of back and forth, but anytime you have Nate in the goal you expect a big performance."

The Demons (3-4-3, 3-6-3) managed to get a couple good scoring chances in a four-minute flurry in the second half. Bismarck's first shot on goal for the contest came in the 57th minute off the foot of senior Hayden Zacher that gave the Demons a bit of pep. "We all had a really good game and we just played really well, created a lot of chances, a lot better than a lot of other games," Reuschlein said. "We hope to keep this momentum going."

In the 60th minute, the Demons forced Olheiser to make a diving fingertip save off a shot from senior Remi Nunez from the far side of the box.

"I definitely saw him," Olheiser said. "I looked over my shoulder and I saw a BHS player coming in so I knew for sure I had to cover both the net and the middle, so I just made sure I got there."

Olheiser finished with two saves. Schaner saved the lone shot he faced, an attempt from Legacy senior Reese Snow from the top of the box. In their previous matchup — a 4-0 victory by Legacy — Pierre-Louis thought his team allowed Legacy more opportunities. This time "Last game we were more defensive where we gave them a lot of respect and were hoping to press the pockets in moments," Pierre-Louis said. "This game we felt like we had to take more risks. We brought more technique in the middle of the field and that really paid off and helped us."

Both teams earned a valuable point for the tie with just a handful of matches remaining in the regular season, but the tie helped Bismarck more than Legacy at the end of the day. The Sabers lost ground in their attempt to overtake Jamestown for the top spot in the conference and is now just three points clear of Minot for second. "We definitely take this as a tie, but we'll definitely use this as energy," Olheiser said. "It's not the result we wanted, but we're definitely going to use it to go on for the next game and the next game."

For Bismarck, the point draws them closer to Century for the fourth spot after the Patriots fell to Dickinson on Saturday. With five games remaining — two against Century — the Demons hope to make some movement in the standings before the regular season concludes.

"It's huge considering the amount of points we have right now," Pierre-Louis said. "Legacy is second place in the league so tying against upper-table teams are always good statistically. Our goal right now is to play at least for third and statistically that is where we can be. But if the league is getting different results and a lot of surprises with the upper-table teams we may have a chance to be a top-two team. But for now this result is good for us."

Both teams are back in action on Tuesday as Bismarck hosts Mandan and Legacy welcomes Dickinson.

BISMARCK 0, LEGACY 0

Bismarck 0 0 — 0

Legacy 0 0 — 0

First half: No scoring.

Second half: No scoring.

Goalkeeper saves: Bismarck — Tate Schaner 0-1—1. Legacy — Nathan Olheiser 0-2—2. Yellow cards: Bismarck — Liam Weis. Legacy — James Guenther.

Records: Bismarck 3-6-2 overall, 3-4-2 West Region for 11 points; Legacy 8-1-2 overall, 7-1-2 West Region for 23 points.