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TOP STORY

## Late Century goal forces tie with Legacy

JOSH DUNGAN

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Century's Norah Green prepares to take a shot on goal as Legacy's Abby Burman moves in to defend during the first match of the season. **DARREN GIBBINS, Tribune**

JOSH DUNGAN

**A** season opener can bring some unexpected results that may not be repeated in a later matchup.

On Friday evening at the MDU Resources Community Bowl, Legacy and Century took to the pitch for each team's first girls soccer game of the year, and both came away with points, as the teams tied 1-1.

"Obviously we wanted to come away with the win to start the season, but (any) points in the WDA are good," Sabers co-head coach Mick Lenhardt said. "Kudos to Century, they pushed us. I would have liked to get one more (goal) in, though."

"The game on our end was a tale of two halves, in the first half, we struggled a bit moving the ball from our back line to our forward line," Patriots head coach Aaron Brennan said. "In the second half, we adjusted some things and our performance gelled much better."

The Sabers played from ahead for nearly half the game after a long, hard shot by Avery Will just eluded the arms of Century goalkeeper Ashlyn Hagerott at 27:18 of the first half.

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"Ella Jones and Avery Will pressed on a girl, the ball popped free and Avery took a good touch and fired a good shot into the wind and it went in," Lenhardt said. "That's what we want our girls to do, that worked out well."

After a back-and-forth start, Legacy had been in control in the ten or so minutes leading up to the goal, and their tally was the peak of their effort after forcing a turnover in Century's end.

"We were passing and possessing the ball a lot better, we were finding pockets of space to move into," Lenhardt said. "In the second half, we got into ping-pong ball along a bit and letting Century counter on us. I don't know if the wind got into our hand, but we got away from how we play."

Century made their halftime adjustments and dictated play in the second half, only getting three shots on frame but keeping the majority of the possession and limiting Legacy's chances.

The third of those three shots on frame were what earned the Patriots the tie, as a long ball into Legacy's penalty box evaded one Legacy defender, then a pileup of Legacy and Century players after a touch by Lexi Stenberg.

Ella Davison charged hard at the pileup initially, then got her foot on the ball just enough to allow it to squeak through the diving arms of Legacy goalie Berlynn Felchle -- who was trying to recover and make her best save of the night -- at the 72:15 mark of the second half.

"The goal we scored, I thought we deserved it, and we even pushed for a second," Brennan said. "Legacy's a fantastic team with great players, so a 1-1 result was fair based on the game as a whole."

"Century was pressing and we didn't handle it the best," Lenhardt said. "That is something we'll need to work on."

Legacy had to play tight defense after Davison's tally to keep Century from pulling out an unlikely come-from-behind victory, as the Patriots pushed hard in the closing seven minutes.

The Patriots recovered from a first half where they had the possession they were looking for in the first few minutes and again in the closing four or five minutes of the half, but allowed Legacy to dictate play otherwise.

"For us, the things that were working well were getting the ball down and finding feet, when we had the wind in the first half, balls that were being played over the top were running out of play," Brennan said. "We asked the girls to get the ball down and find feet, and to do that we had to have good movement off-ball."

Helping Century's offense throughout the night was a 5-1 advantage in corner kicks, though the lack of time in practice to work on set plays kept Century from being able to take advantage of their extra scoring opportunities.

"The number of corners we had was a product of our good build-up play and working the ball into the final third," Brennan said. "Sometimes in the final third our decision-making could have been better, our passing could have been better, but we didn't get much time this week to work on set pieces, so we went with a simple approach of putting a lot of players in the six-yard box and hoping for a good delivery."

"Once or twice I thought we had a nice knockdown to get a shot on frame, but the most pleasing part of that was us advancing the ball into the final third and we'll be working more on set pieces to taking better advantage of the number of chances we get from those positions."

When Legacy was able to hold onto the ball in the second half, they gave Hagerott everything she could handle.

"Goals in soccer are rare, so every one is important," Lenhardt said. "If we get a couple of (our chances) in, it's a totally different game."

Several of the chances were in tight on the senior keeper, and she had to have good hands to keep possession on plays in tight with traffic around her.

"It can be a challenging thing for a keeper, them not always being involved, so her concentration had to be good because Legacy has some fantastic forwards," Brennan said. "When Legacy was getting shots off on goal, Ashlyn was in the right areas, her hands were fantastic and she's a captain for a reason, we depend on her and tonight she did what we expected."

Legacy's hopes for a strong start after being a well-regarded fourth in the preseason conference poll will be tested, as they face Minot and Bismarck in their two games next week.

"We get the meat-grinder, we go to the multi-time defending state champion in Minot and then Bismarck is always tough," Lenhardt said. "Would have liked to come away with three points tonight, but if we can play Minot well, I don't know if we'll get a point up there, but hopefully we can get a good result against Bismarck later in the week. Nobody said soccer is easy, but we're up for the challenge."

As for the Patriots, picked to finish sixth in this year's poll, Century gave themselves a chance to start strong with a home game against Williston on Tuesday and a road game in Dickinson on Friday.

"We get about a week to prepare with tryouts and picking the team, then we only had one or two days to instill my philosophies and the principles I want the girls to play with," Brennan said. "Going into next week, the most important thing is the girls enjoy the performance tonight, rest up and recover and then on Monday we can work on some things and correct some things."

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## Century 1, Legacy 1

Century;0;1;--;1

Legacy;1;0;--;1

**First half:** 1. Legacy, Avery Will (Unassisted), 27:18.

**Second half:** 2. Century, Ella Davison (Lexi Stenberg), 72:15.

**Goaltender saves:** Century -- Ashlyn Hagerott 3-5--8. Legacy -- Berlynn Felchle 4-2--6.

**Corner kicks:** Century -- 5. Legacy -- 1.

**Records:** Century 0-0-1 West Region for one point, 0-0-1 overall; Legacy 0-0-1 West Region for one point, 0-0-1 overall.

**By JOSH DUNGAN**

**Sports Reporter**

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