

# Possession-driven offense powers Legacy past Dickinson, 3-1



Legacy midfielder Bengi Rodriguez, right, dribbles the ball around the defense of Dickinson defender Justin Wardell before scoring the Sabers' second goal of the first half at the MDU Resources Community Bowl on Thursday.

MIKE MCCLEARY, Tribune

JOSH DUNGAN Bismarck Tribune

The tenacity of the wind blowing throughout Thursday night's game between Legacy and Dickinson at the Bismarck Community Bowl was matched by Legacy's tenacious, possession-heavy offense.

The Sabers, having taken a 2-1 road loss to the Midgets earlier in the year, avenged that defeat with a 3-1 victory at home.

"We felt we were the better team going into last time, but it doesn't matter if you control the ball, you have to put it in the back of the net," Legacy head coach Tom Marcis said. "Our game is control and we build up from the back. We did that in the first game but weren't able to put it in the back of the net. Fortunately we were able to in this game."

Starting the game under blue skies, the Sabers pressed hard to break through the Midgets' defense, but Dickinson's back line, led by senior goalkeeper Jace Hughes, held firm initially.

A break came for Legacy more than halfway through the first half when Hughes had to leave the game to get a bloody nose, sustained in a possession skirmish near the goal mouth, tended to, and before Hughes could return to the game, Sabers junior midfielder Matthew Souther got a pass from fellow midfielder Reece Snow right in front of the net and knocked it home.

"We're working hard to make sure we have possession and that in the offensive third we're able to put good strikes and runs on the net," Marcis said.

Shortly thereafter, a disputed ball along the sidelines was kept alive by Legacy and junior midfielder Benji Rodriguez collected a ball initially put on net by senior midfielder Dylan Ellingson and edged it through Hughes' arms.

"We always tell our players, if you think the ball is out, you have to wait for the whistle. If it's out of play, they'll blow the whistle and stop you," Marcis said. "It's hard to do if you think it's out, but until the referee blows the whistle, it doesn't matter, it's not out."

Dickinson's long-ball offense had a few chances in the first half, with the closest of the bunch bouncing hard off the crossbar and back onto the field of play. But Legacy's defense held and headed into the halftime break with a 2-0 lead.

The dark clouds swiftly rolling in as the second half started didn't dampen the spirits of Legacy's offense. They pushed hard and less than 10 minutes into the second half, after an initial ball into the box ricocheted through the arms of a tumbling Hughes, sophomore defender Gavyn Nygren took a feed from senior midfielder Jack Byberg and calmly made it a 3-0 game.

"Two of our three goals we scored were purely on hustle. The first guy didn't score, but the trailing guy did, and that's also something we've been discussing," Marcis said. "That's what happened Tuesday against Mandan, a couple of goals were scored because of the hustle following behind the play."

Hughes was in and out of the game several times, but after the third Legacy goal, he pulled himself out and allowed his replacement, senior Michael Lucas, to take over. Lucas was forced to make a number of saves, as the Sabers pushed hard to make it a four-goal game, but Dickinson's defense held up.

The second-half offensive efforts of the Midgets were hindered time and again by offside whistles, but on one of the few clean runs they made into Legacy's end, a tackle in the penalty box was a little too firm and freshman midfielder Rupert Deniz stepped in to take a penalty shot for the Midgets. He beat sophomore Legacy goalie Nathaniel Olheiser clean to make it a 3-1 game.

"Our defense has to be in a better position earlier in the play. By the time you let the ball get that deep, you're in a foot race and anything

can happen," Marcis said. "What caused the PK happened 20 to 30 yards up the field. If we would have controlled the ball sooner, we wouldn't have been in that position."

After the goal, Legacy kept a tiring Dickinson offense away from the ball and ran out the clock on their fourth win of the season.

Olheiser made six saves for Legacy in the victory. Hughes (six) and Lucas (seven) combined for 13 saves on Dickinson's end.

On Saturday, Dickinson returns to Bismarck for a match against Century and Legacy heads to Sanford Sports Complex to face Bismarck.

Legacy 3, Dickinson 1

(At the Bowl)

**First half:** 1. L, Matthew Souther (Reece Snow), 32. 2. L, Benji Rodriguez (Dylan Ellingson), 38.

**Second half:** 3. L, Gavyn Nygren (Jack Byberg), 45. 1. D, Rupert Deniz (unassisted), 54.

**Goalkeeper saves:** D -- Jace Hughes 3-3 -- 6, Michael Lucas 3-4 -- 7. L -- Nathaniel Olheiser 3-3 -- 6.

**Yellow cards:** D -- Fabrico Pereira. L -- Jacob Lelm.

**Records:** Dickinson 3-6-2 West Region, 11 points, 3-6-2 overall; Legacy 5-4-2, 17, 6-4-3.