



TANNER ECKER, TRIBUNE

Legacy's Kobe Lee (7) puts a shot on goal during Tuesday's game against Mandan-St. Mary's at Starion Sports Complex.

SABERS, BRAVES BATTLE TO SCORELESS DRAW

Mandan-St. Mary's sends late chance off goalpost

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Bismarck Tribune

Scoring has been a guaranteed proposition for Mandan-St. Mary's through its first three games.

The Braves were finally held off the scoreboard on Tuesday night against Legacy in a home match at Starion Sports Complex.

Fortunately for Mandan-St. Mary's, the defense came to play as well, and they held the Sabers scoreless for the third time in five games thus far to have each side finish with a point in the West Region standings.

"It was a pretty rough game overall, it was all over the place for both teams," Braves head coach Aaron McElwee said. "First half we were terrible, but I thought we dominated the second half."

"Proud of the way the boys played, we're much younger than we were last year, this team has talent but we're trying to get into our rhythm," Legacy head coach Tom Marcis said. "We have a lot of guys who didn't play or didn't play much last year who are stepping into leadership, but it's getting better. We had a lot of good looks, one right away at the beginning, we just need to start putting them in the back of the net."

Though Legacy handily won the shots on goal battle, the Sabers were never able to break through the last line of defense for the Braves.

Keeper Ben Allan had a solid day in net for MSM, making six stops in the first half and three in the second, but his positioning kept Legacy off the scoreboard as much as anything, reading the Sabers' opportunities throughout the game perfectly.

"We didn't look at the races at all in the first half," McElwee said. "Ben made some good saves, but we were all over the place defensively. We regrouped at halftime."

"(Allan) was in the right position, part of it is a confidence issue," Marcis said. "Putting goals in is a confidence issue, last year we depended on the older guys to do it and now they're the ones who need to do it. We're getting there."

Mandan-St. Mary's did have their opportunities in both halves, putting four shots on net in the first half and another credited one in the second, but keeper James Erickson had his own solid day in net.

Erickson was tested most when Mandan-St. Mary's was able to beat Legacy's defense around the outside with their long speed, which tested Erickson's ability to handle crosses.

"Made a few adjustments, but we need players to step up in their roles when things aren't going our way," McElwee said. "Players need to step up and take on the role of scoring a goal."

"They play a game where they want to move the ball fast on the side," Marcis said. "Even though we've progressed into a younger team, we still want to possess the ball, so we found that as we play together as a team and they pass the ball, the better we pass, the better we play."

Erickson was also boosted by a solid performance from Legacy's defense, which blocked upwards of half a dozen shots throughout the night to stymie Mandan-St. Mary's best opportunities.

One block in particular was particularly crucial, with a pair of Legacy defenders tying up a Braves attacking player right in the goalmouth until Erickson could locate the ball.

"We haven't had a lot of goals scored on us from inside the box," Marcis said. "We've been pretty solid. As we continue to combine up, things will continue to get better."



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Legacy's Kaden Scherr (3) and Mandan-St. Mary's Conner Lundeen (7) battle for the ball during Tuesday's game at Starion Sports Complex.

James is the best keeper in the West, but it still takes team defense, you can't rely on your keeper to stop everything. We're working better and better each game in the back."

Legacy's defense also had a solid day in defending Mandan-St. Mary's corner kicks, with one particular stretch of the second half containing four straight corner kicks for the Braves.

Legacy defended everyone, and on the final opportunity Mandan-St. Mary's kicked the ball out for a Sabers goal kick, finally lifting the pressure.

"That showed how much pressure we kept them under in the second half," McElwee said. "They didn't get in our half much, but we have to take chances that are there and we didn't do that tonight, so I'm disappointed."

"The defense stayed home and did what they were supposed to do," Marcis said. "Obviously you'd rather them clear it than have four successive corner kicks, but the ball was put in good position for them to score, we played good defense to keep it out." But if there's a chance that Mandan-St. Mary's will want back, it would be their last one. Putting heavy pressure on the Legacy net into the closing minute, a hard shot from Lucas Howard rocketed off the right goalpost in a direction that Man-dan-St. Mary's fans in the crowd thought would end with the ball in the back of the net.

No such luck was had for the Braves, as the ball instead bounded away, content with entering neither goal through the 80-minute contest.

"Just wasn't our night to score, but it was a clean sheet and we're still unbeaten, so I guess we'll take it," McElwee said.

"The goal is the size it is for a reason," Marcis said. "Real happy with the progress the boys are making, our record doesn't show it yet but I think we'll be in the mix at the end."

Both teams have challenging upcoming schedules.

Mandan-St. Mary's will battle through a home game against Jamestown next Tuesday before back-to-back trips up to Minot to play first Minot North (Thursday, Sept. 10) and then Minot (Tuesday Sept. 15).

"There's no easy game in the West, but we're defensively tough to break down," McElwee said. "But we have to take chances on the other end to win. That's the reality."

"We'll go back to the drawing board, working on crossing and finishing, building on what we've done so far this season."

As for the Sabers, they stay in town for a while, hosting Dickinson tonight before playing 'away' games against Bismarck next Tuesday and Century next Thursday.

“This is the kind of defensive game we need to get ready for (Bismarck and Century),” Marcis said. “We’re continuing to work on finishing. We finish in practice, we know we can do it, now it’s the confidence that we’re on varsity and we need to put the ball in the net.”

Mandan-St. Mary’s 0, Legacy 0

Legacy	0	0	--	0
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Mandan-St. Mary’s	0	0	--	0
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First half: No scoring.

Second half: No scoring.

Goalkeeper saves: Legacy — James Erickson 4-1--5. MSM — Ben Allan 6-3--9.

Corner kicks: Legacy 2-0--2. MSM 1-5--6.

Records: Mandan-St. Mary’s 2-0-2 West Region for eight points, 2-0-2 overall; Legacy 1-2-2 West Region for five points, 1-2-2 overall.