

Sabers score early, beat Century 6-1

Josh Dungan – Bismarck Tribune

The first Century-Legacy boys soccer matchup of the season was a 2-1 come-from-behind win for Century.

Legacy (12-2, 11-2 West Region) reversed the result, and then some, in the rematch Tuesday evening, powering past the Patriots (5-5-4, 4-4-4 West Region) 6-1 at the Bowl.

"We were encouraging the boys to stay sharp even though we know we're guaranteed to play in the championship game, guaranteed to go to state," Legacy head coach Tom Marcis said. "In practice, we were getting on the boys to keep attacking. We haven't lost since that Century loss earlier this year.

"Having beaten Bismarck 3-0 on Saturday, we didn't know what team would show up, and then we scored 30 seconds in and we were clearly ready to play."

Legacy junior midfielder Ben McDonald got his team on the board less than a minute into the contest, scoring the first goal of his hat trick unassisted 48 seconds into the game.

Senior midfielder Benji Rodriguez was quick to join his teammate in the scoring column, making it 2-0 Legacy 55 seconds later when he beat Century goalie Brayden Underhill.

"We are fortunate to have five or six guys that can score consistently," Marcis said. "Others can do it as well, but the five or six who can score consistently make us dangerous because teams can't focus in on one or two players."

Running wherever they wanted against Century's defense, the Legacy offense kept the pressure on.

A through ball reached freshman midfielder Uriel Rivera nine-and-a-half minutes after Rodriguez's tally, and despite having a Century defender all but glued to his hip, Rivera knocked in Legacy's third goal of the game.

"With our through balls, historically we haven't been able to score on them," Marcis said. "With the players we have, we're at a point now where we have four or five guys up top who can be switched around to make it difficult defensively against us."

While they didn't score any goals off of its opportunities, Legacy's set pieces created a number of high-danger scoring chances, with players just inches away from adding several goals to Legacy's eventual five-score victory.

"The one concern we had, and we cleaned it up at halftime, is that as a possession team, it's easy for us to fall into a mindset of expecting to possess (the ball)," Marcis said. "We got into expecting possession in the middle of the first half and that gave Century the opportunity to score their goal."

"We didn't want to get away from possession, but possession should lead to attacking, not just possessing the ball. Our possession becomes more critical when we're attacking."

Down 3-0, Century got its lone goal after keeping a ball alive deep in Legacy's defensive half. Max Senechal took possession and scored off an assist from Parker Hopfauf.

McDonald was far from finished. Quickly answering Century's goal before the halftime buzzer, he matched Rivera's goal stylistically with a deep run into Century territory with a Patriots defender by his side before slipping the ball past Underhill to restore a three-goal lead for the Sabers.

"I was working on making runs through the back line, and it worked out well," McDonald said. "We worked on through balls in practice, and it turned out well."

Exactly three minutes into the second half, McDonald completed his hat trick, beating Underhill cleanly again for his ninth goal of the year and a 5-1 Legacy lead.

Sloppy play in Century's defensive end less than three minutes later allowed Rodriguez to clean up a ball that both Underhill and a Century defender had a chance to play, sending the clock into running time with his second goal of the game.

"We have a lot of chemistry, we've been playing together for many years, and it's turned out well this year," McDonald said. "People have doubted us, but we've showed them."

Both teams gave their subs a chance with plenty of time remaining on the clock, keeping their players fresh as the end of the regular season approaches.

"They beat us last time, so it felt good to beat them this time," McDonald said. "We tried to play well and combine passes well."

McDonald finished with three goals. Rivera had a goal and two assists. Kamden Kooiman had three assists, and Jacob Lelm assisted on a pair of goals.

Century's defeat was muffled somewhat by the other results in West Region play Tuesday, as the Patriots were guaranteed the fourth seed and a spot in a state play-in game after Bismarck beat Jamestown 7-1, while Mandan tied 2-2 with Williston.

As for the Sabers, their win sets up a regular season conference title game on the road against Minot on Thursday.

"Legacy hasn't made it to the championship game before," McDonald said. "We're hoping to win both the regular season title and the championship game and move on to state."

The winner of the Legacy-Minot game on Thursday earns the top seed for the region championship game Sept. 29 at St. Mary's.

"It's always tough going to Minot," Marcis said. "We expect a hard-fought game. Our styles are different from each other, so it's always interesting when we play them, because we're trying to draw each other into our own styles of play. They have a good keeper and we'll be expecting to need several shots to get any goals."

Legacy 6, Century 1

Legacy;4;2;--;6

Century;1;0;--;1

First half: 1. Legacy, Ben McDonald (Uriel Rivera), 1st minute. 2. Legacy, Benji Rodriguez (Kamden Kooiman), 2nd minute. 3. Legacy, U. Rivera (Jacob Lelm), 12th minute. 4. Century, Max Senechal (Parker Hopfauf), 35th minute. 5. Legacy, B. McDonald (J. Lelm), 39th minute.

Second half: 6. Legacy, B. McDonald (K. Kooiman, Matt Souther), 44th minute. 7. B. Rodriguez (K. Kooiman, U. Rivera), 46th minute.

Goalkeeper saves: Legacy -- Nathaniel Ohlheiser 4-1--5; Liam Horner x-2--2. Century -- Brayden Underhill 4-2--6.

Records: Legacy 12-2-0 overall, 11-2-0 West Region for 33 points; Century 5-5-4 overall, 4-4-4 West Region for 19 points.



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