

C-J Sports

In OT thriller,

Wambach's goal gives Mercy 2-1 win over Cardinal Mooney

By Richard A. Kiley

When the Mercy girls' varsity basketball team needed a clutch basket last season, it looked to Beth Wambach to take the shot. She usually made it.

Last Thursday, October 1, Laura Wambach — yes, Beth's sister — used the second overtime in a key soccer game against defending Private-Parochial champion Cardinal Mooney to showcase her scoring talents.

A goal by the senior striker just :09 into the second overtime proved to be the game winner, as the Monarchs earned a come-from-behind 2-1 win over Mooney before a large home crowd.

For the Wambachs, scoring has always been all in the family.

The goal may arguably be the biggest one ever for the Mercy soccer program, which improved its record to 9-0 for the season after the win over Mooney (5-3-1).

During the first half, however, it didn't look like Mercy would get a chance to stage any overtime heroics. Scott Morrison's Lady Cards came out and forced the play as well as an early mistake that led to their only goal on the chilly afternoon.

Moments after a Mooney corner kick, the Mercy defense was unable to clear the ball out of danger, and stopper Alina Martinez beat Monarch goalie Andrea Colaruotolo to give her teammates a 1-0 lead just eight minutes into the match.

Although Mercy was able to recover from what seemed to be early-game jitters, it mustered little offense compared to what it had done to previous opponents.

And the Monarchs' coach knew it.

"We looked unorganized in the first half, and I told them that," said Kathy Boughton, who also coaches the girls' varsity basketball team at the all-girls' school.

The Monarchs turned their play and the game around in the second half, and were able to tie the game with a goal by Hollie Sims at 26:08. Sims' goal was made possible by Wendy White — who played superbly according to Boughton — when she anticipated an attempted clear by the Lady Cardinal defense. White's pass/shot deflected off of Wambach to Sims, who kicked the ball past a diving Julie Monfalcon.

Both teams had chances to score in regula-

tion and the first overtime, but great goaltending and not-so-great field conditions kept the game tied until Wambach's goal.

"The field (conditions) played a big factor; there was tons of water out there," Boughton said after the game. "The team going to one end of the field (without as much water near the goal) had an advantage."

Morrison said he noticed the poor conditions while he did his usual pacing on the sidelines, but he really found out just how bad the field conditions were when he went out to attend to an injured Mooney player.

"I thought, I'd need a lifejacket to get back," the Mooney coach quipped.

As it turned out, all three goals were scored on the team defending the goal where the water wasn't as much a factor.

After a scoreless first overtime, Wambach found a seam in the Mooney offense to convert the game winner from about 20 yards out. Julie Buntich, who had been more noted for her scoring this season, worked a perfect give-and-go play with Wambach off the opening kickoff.

"Laura and Julie know they have the right to do whatever they want to do on the kickoff," Boughton said. "It was a perfect give-and-go. I was surprised Laura took the shot. I've been trying to emphasize to her that we expect her to shoot; she's our striker."

The game proved a real gut check for Mercy, which had been beating teams by four and five goals a game prior to the close contest against Mooney.

"It's always an emotional game when we play Mooney. I was happy to see we had the ability to bounce back; it's a credit to my team's character," Boughton said. "I told them how far we'd come and how proud I was of them for coming from behind to get the tie."

"My girls were mentally and physically exhausted after the game."

To illustrate just how nip-and-tuck the game was, one scorebook had the shots on both sides even at 34.

Now Morrison, who was leary of his girls getting too down after a big loss must try and rejuvenate a recently dormant Mooney offense. After the game against Mercy, and an ensuing 2-0 loss to Hilton, the Mooney coach said he was looking for one player to step forward and score more consistently.



Mooney's Kim Probst (left) and Mercy's Katie Doyle battle for possession of the ball during the Monarchs' overtime win over the Lady Cards.

"Somebody has to come forward and start scoring, and I think that will happen," said Morrison, who pointed out that the back-to-back losses to Mercy and Hilton were the first time in his tenure that Mooney had lost two games in a row. "That person hasn't come forward yet but I think she will."

"I still think this is the best offensive team I've had in many years," Morrison said.

The Mooney coach, who said he was displeased with his club's listless performance against the Lady Cadets under the lights last Saturday, October 3, hopes his Lady Cards can

muster more offense against non-league opponents Attica and Harley-Allendale-Columbia this week.

"A lot of the kids are going to learn from the experience (under the lights at Hilton)," Morrison said. "We're going to get back to the basics in practice this week and see if we can turn it around."

The Lady Cards will need to do that if they have any hopes of retaining the Private-Parochial League crown or beating Mercy when the two teams meet again on October 22 — the last game of the regular season.

Diocesan high school grid teams jockey for position at season's midpoint

By Richard A. Kiley

Last weekend's games marked the halfway point of the high school football regular season, and several diocesan teams solidified their chances and hopes for league titles with big wins.

McQuaid 10, Kearney 0

During its recent illustrious past, in which McQuaid and head coach Tom Sprague reached the sectional grid finals three consecutive years, the Knights were known mostly for their high-powered offense.

This season the team has been riding the coattails of a relentless defense, which has yielded a mere 34 points in four games.

The latest defensive gem came in a 10-0 win last Saturday, Oct. 3, at City-Catholic rival Bishop Kearney, which ran up 50 points against East Syracuse-Minoa just a week earlier.

"I was at that game, and I saw how Kearney's linemen controlled the line of scrimmage," Sprague said. "They (East Syracuse-Minoa) matched up as far as size, but Kearney's linemen were quicker."

It wasn't the same story in the trenches against McQuaid. Led by 210-lb. linemen Brian Laudadio, who benches 325 lbs. off the field, the Knights controlled the line of scrimmage all game. McQuaid ended up with 134 rushing yards, most of those by Joe Ritchie. The Knight back rushed for 90 yards in all, 53 of those coming on a TD run in the second quarter.

It was the only score McQuaid would need on a day when the defense held the highly touted Kearney offense to 126 yards rushing and

minus 21 passing yards.

A 37-yard field goal by Kevin Flanagan, equaling the Knight senior's longest kick of the season, closed out the scoring.

"That kick really sealed the win for us; there was no way they were going to come down and score twice on us after that," said Sprague, referring to Flanagan's kick with just more than three minutes remaining in the game. "Special teams really came through."

So did the defense.

"This was a big test for our defense. Brain Laudadio is always stronger than the man he's up against and I think that was the main reason we were able to control the line of scrimmage," Sprague said. "We're starting to get back on track."

In addition to the McQuaid defense, the inclement weather also caused problems for the Kearney offense before rain-soaked fans. The muddy conditions didn't hamper Ritchie, a former tailback who seems to have benefitted a great deal from a switch to the fullback slot.

"He (Ritchie) doesn't have blazing speed, but he doesn't lose anything when he runs 50-60 yards," Sprague said. "And our offense has more fullback (oriented) plays... Joe has responded well to the switch."

With the exception of Ritchie, who has been averaging 115 yards per game on the ground, the Knights offense has shown few glimpses of the kind McQuaid had when it reached the finals. In fact, in a game against divisional rival East this season, McQuaid turned the ball over seven times.

"Our offense is a little behind schedule," said



McQuaid tailback Chris Passero looks for an opening in the Bishop Kearney defense during first quarter action from the Knights' 10-0 win over the Fighting Kings.

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