

No hiding for these Hawks

Written by Steve Ostermann
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Two more wins in hand, Grafton measures up to standing as soccer team to be reckoned with

In recent years, the Grafton Black Hawks have had a knack of sneaking up on soccer opponents who underestimated their talent as a Division 2 girls' team.

But those days appear to be a thing of the past for the Hawks, who have made a strong statement as a squad to be reckoned with early this season.

"We're probably not going to sneak up on a lot of people this time," said Grafton coach Don Arnold, whose team posted its fourth straight win last Friday at Slinger.

"The more we win, the higher the expectations will be for us, but that's all right."

Grafton defeated Slinger, 2-0, in a nonconference game after blanking Cedarburg by the same margin in North Shore Conference play April 20.

Friday's win improved the Hawks' season record to 6-1-2 — an impressive start in which they have outscored foes, 24-3, and climbed to No. 3 in last week's Division 2 state soccer coaches poll.

Slinger didn't go down without a fight, though. The Owls battled Grafton to a scoreless standoff for one half before the Hawks took control.

Sophomore forward Hannah Eichler provided the game winner in the 53rd minute when she netted a volley shot off a corner kick by teammate Emma Fatla.

Fifteen minutes later, Melissa Hencke scored an insurance goal with an assist from Angie Mann.

"Hannah had a great goal that gave us a big lift against a good Slinger team," Arnold said.

"We came and started with no spark. There was no pep in our step, and we were lucky we weren't behind at halftime."

After catching fire, the Hawks finished with a 19-10 edge in shots and secured

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their sixth shutout in their last seven games.

Grafton 2, Cedarburg 0

Eichler contributed to a pair of first-half goals that gave the Hawks control in a league road win April 20.

Eichler scored first in the fifth minute off an assist from Ali Lorge.

At 27 minutes, Carley Pfannerstill doubled the margin off a feed from Eichler.

“It was a fantastic win for us. Cedarburg is always a tough team to play, especially on their field,” Arnold said.

“The only disappointing thing was that we stopped attacking after the 27th minute. After that, we sat back and seemed content to play defense.”

Cedarburg pressed its attack throughout the second half but was unable to crack the Hawks’ defense. The Bulldogs finished with a 28-19 edge in shots but couldn’t get one past sophomore goalkeeper Alissa Viste, who had 19 saves.

Arnold also credited Hannah Knauer for an outstanding job in marking forward Lydia Koenig, the Bulldogs’ top scoring threat.

The win evened Grafton’s NSC record at 1-0-1 heading into another conference game Tuesday against Nicolet.

This weekend, the Hawks will travel to Uihlein Soccer Park in Milwaukee to play in the Moynihan Cup, which will have several other state-ranked teams. Their first game in the eight-team tournament will be at 5:30 p.m. Friday against Brookfield East.

Play will continue with championship and consolation brackets on Saturday.

On May 4, Grafton will play a 7 p.m. road game against Whitefish Bay, the defending NSC champion.

Pirates fall twice in tournament

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The Port Washington girls' soccer team continued to struggle to find the net during a pair of losses in a four-team tournament at Shorewood last weekend.

The Pirates lost, 2-0, to South Milwaukee in the consolation final Saturday after being edged, 1-0, by Whitefish Bay Dominican on Friday.

"We were right in both games and could have won them," said Port coach Sean O'Brien, whose team fell to 0-4.

"We played well, but we had trouble finishing on offense."

Against South Milwaukee, the Pirates had a 10-3 edge in shots but had several attempts either deflect off a post or sail just wide, O'Brien said.

Trailing, 1-0, with two minutes left, Port put in an extra attacker to go for the tying goal, only to have the Rockets tack on an easy score.

"Even so, I was pleased with our effort," O'Brien said.

In Friday's semifinals, the Pirates played Dominican to a scoreless deadlock in the first half before surrendering a goal off a corner kick early in the second period.

Despite the weekend losses, O'Brien said he was encouraged by his team's play. He singled out the defense of juniors Mallory Mueller and keeper Alex Pallo and strong all-around efforts by juniors Bre McDonald and Cassie Braam and freshman Brianna Krueger.

"We're getting better each game. It's just a matter of time until we start putting it all together," O'Brien said.

Nicolet 5, Port Washington 0

After trailing, 2-0, at halftime, the Pirates couldn't muster a comeback in a North Shore Conference road loss April 20.

The Knights turned the game into a rout by scoring three goals in the second period.

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This week, Port resumed NSC play against Whitefish Bay on Tuesday.

The Pirates' next games will be on the road against Milwaukee Lutheran at 7 p.m. May 4 and against Brown Deer at 4:30 p.m. May 5.