

Wildcats win 2-0, advance in soccer playoffs

Written by Butch Burney

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By BUTCH BURNEY

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McKINNEY – Carrollton Newman Smith had an early chance Tuesday night to take control of the Class 4A bi-district soccer match-up with the Sulphur Springs Wildcats. When the Trojans couldn't cash in, the Wildcats made sure they had few other chances.

Sulphur Springs put the defensive clamps on the Trojans in the first-round playoff game and got two goals from senior Brian DeLa Rosa to take a 2-0 victory at McKinney North High School.

The win means the Wildcats will once again get a second-round match-up with state-ranked Frisco Liberty, a team they upset 3-2 last year in the same round. The game is set for 7:30 p.m. Friday at Princeton.

Against Newman Smith, the Wildcats found themselves in a precarious situation at the 18-minute mark of the first half when the Trojans' Luis Rodriguez set up to take a penalty shot from 11 yards out after Josh Malone was fouled in the box. Rodriguez's shot, though went well high of the goal, and the Wildcats could exhale still tied at 0-0.

"We dodged a bullet early with the penalty kick," said SSSH head coach Andy Holt. "I felt like we were controlling the game and doing some good things, but they have some guys up front on the counter attack that could get you, and they got us in that situation. Fortunately, they missed the penalty kick, and from that point on, I thought we kind of got rolling."

In fact, the Trojans only took three more shots on goal for the remainder of the game.

The Wildcats, meanwhile, got on the attack with the new life, and finally cashed in with 2:36 to play in the first half when sophomore Scott Galarza assisted DeLa Rosa on a pass from 10 yards out, which DeLa Rosa powered into the net. The play began on a free kick near the center line by Samuel Gallegos.

That allowed the Wildcats to go into halftime with a 1-0 lead. The goal came on their sixth shot of the game, four of them by DeLa Rosa, who had a shot blocked by the keeper, then the rebound header sail over the goal just a few minutes before his score.

"Sometimes missing those goals comes back to haunt you, but Brian kept getting in there and getting opportunities," Holt said. "He played a great game."

After getting the lead, the Wildcats' defense played an even stronger game, with Newman Smith attempting just three shots on goal in the second half, two of which were stopped by keeper Moises Torres.

"I think it was as good defensively as we've played this year, other than the one mishap on the penalty kick," Holt said. "Samuel Gallegos did a great job. He was flying all over. Juan Gomez played really well. Ryan Watson battled, and Moises made a few plays."

Then, when DeLa Rosa took an outstanding cross from junior Adrian Lopez from the right corner to the back side pole and knocked it in the net with eight minutes left in the match, the Wildcats had what proved to be an insurmountable 2-0 lead.

"I knew they were no good, no question," Holt said of the Trojans. "But, I thought we played really hard and we played smart."

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Midfielders Tanner Ramirez and Leo Sanchez helped control the ball, and that was a key, the coach explained.

“Tanner and Leo are great at battling,” Holt said. “Tanner did a great job at winning balls in the air and Leo is more of our possession guy. They were both very active tonight.”

Sulphur Springs continues in the playoffs with a 14-6-6 mark. The year ends for Newman Smith at 10-11-2.

The Wildcats will need another excellent game in the next round when they take on Frisco Liberty, who beat Sherman 9-0 in their bi-district game Monday.

The Redhawks are 21-1 on the season and ranked No. 4 in the state.