

Sep. 8 Girls Soccer

Five-minute explosion by Ibanez enough to sink Nottingham in opener

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

Sep. 8: Last year, Nottingham seemed to play one good half and one bad one.

If you look at the line score in today's season opener, it might seem that was the case again. West Windsor-Plainsboro North scored three second-half goals for a 3-0 victory, but it wasn't actually a "bad" half.

It was a bad 4 minutes and 25 seconds, in which Northern Knight forward Jenn Ibanez scored a hat trick to stun Nottingham.

"We played a good game minus five minutes," said coach Elyse Diamond. "It was those five minutes that really made the difference. Take that away and we're in the game. Mentally we're gonna work on that.

"We took some good things out of this. We're hoping to be in a lot more games this year than we were last year."

Nottingham actually did play a strong game against a solid Knights squad that is going to win its share this season.

The Northstars peppered the goal early, getting three quick shots that were turned away by Knights goalie Stefanie Wisotsky.

WWPN came back to seize the play but sophomore 'keeper Chelsea Toscano kept the net clean with four of her six saves.

"I thought she stepped up today," Diamond said. "This is a pressure game and I thought she handled herself well."

In the second half, Nottingham nearly took the lead, but Kristina Ragolia's shot from in front went over the goal to keep it scoreless.

"That was unusual for her, she usually does finish," Diamond said.

It then became Ibanez's turn to finish, as Toscano had little chance against her rapid-fire scores that came at 29:33, 26:22 and 25:02.

During that run, Nottingham became a little over-anxious.

"I think we dove in a lot on defense instead of containing with a little more patience," Diamond said. "That will come. It's the first game.

"I'm really happy with how they played. Take that five minutes away and it's a good game for us."

Which beats having to take away an entire half.

* * * *

Hamilton-Trenton and Steinert-Hightstown were both postponed due to poor field conditions.