

No.1 Prairie suffers 2nd loss

Written by Mike Condon
Thursday, 18 April 2013 19:11 -

The fortunes of the Cedar Rapids Prairie boys soccer team have turned as nasty as this week's weather.

After starting out a somewhat surprising 8-0 and gaining a No. 1 state ranking in Class 3A, the Hawks have hit a rough patch. Coming off a 6-0 loss to Iowa City West on Tuesday, Prairie got off to a slow start Thursday afternoon against No. 4 Iowa City High.

The Little Hawks (8-1) got a goal from Fernando Pacheco off a corner just four minutes into the game and added an early second-half tally en route to a 3-1 victory at John Wall Field.

Coach Curt Lewis thought the Hawks might take some time to adjust after losing so many seniors off last season's squad. The fast start was a surprise, but Lewis said he knew Prairie still had plenty of tough teams to play.

"We were our own worst enemy today," Lewis said as both teams scampered off the field to get out of the windy, rainy conditions. The game was originally scheduled to be a night game, but was moved up three hours due to the cold wind chills predicted for the nighttime hours.

Prairie was determined to play a better match after Tuesday's 6-0 loss at West and did have some solid stretches. A couple of defensive lapses at the start of each half cost the Hawks two goals.

Pacheco netted City's first goal on a short corner. He took the pass, went around a Prairie defender and knocked the ball past keeper Adam Kueny for the goal.

"We didn't react quick enough on the short corner," Lewis said. "That gave them a 2v1 and they put it in the back of the net."

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Pacheco struck again just a minute into the second half. He cut into the penalty box, took a pass in stride and put it past Kueny for a 2-0 City High lead.

"We tried to change some things up at halftime and then we come out and give up an early goal," Lewis said. "You can't do that and expect to beat a good team and City High is a very good team."

City High's third goal came just two minutes later. It was keyed by a beautiful pass from Pacheco. He took a pass from his brother Alejandro, then returned the ball to his brother, who slipped it past Kueny for a 3-0 Little Hawk advantage.

The Hawks had many more scoring chances in the second half. They cut the lead to 3-1 when Logan Rindernecht scored off a scramble in front of the net with just under 30 minutes remaining. Prairie kept up the pressure, but was unable to break through the rest of the way.

Lewis was upbeat about the rest of the Hawks' season. He knows his team will be in a battle each time out as the Mississippi Valley Conference is stacked with ranked teams. Matches against ranked teams Linn-Mar, Dubuque Wahlert and Cedar Rapids Kennedy are coming up.

"Hey, we are what we are," he said. "We were fortunate to have a good start playing good competition game in and game out. We were due to lose. It just happened to be this week where we have lost to two quality opponents who both have some outstanding athletes.

"We've got a lot of young kids," continued Lewis. "It's the MVC and they aren't used to seeing so many quality opponents each time out."