

Jacks, Otters play to a tie

09-14-2021, Rutland Herald, by Tom Haley



Windsor's Karen Kapuscinski (20) tries to scoop the ball away from Otter Valley's Alice Keith (7) during a field hockey matchup on Monday in Brandon.

Photo by Hannah Diction



Otter Valley's Marissa Connors (23) winds up to hit the ball past Windsor defender Alexina Peckinpaugh (55) during Monday's field hockey game in Brandon.

Photo by Hannah Dicton

BRANDON — There is a lot of grass out there with high school field hockey's 7-on-7 overtime format. The will is there, but sometimes the legs are not by that point and neither Otter Valley or Windsor could get the goal, setting for a 2-2 tie.

Windsor's best chance during the overtime came when Peyton Richardson drilled a hard shot on goal only to be denied on a terrific save by Otter Valley goalie Lily Morgan.

"Lily made a great save. She played a great game," OV coach Jodie Keith said.

The Otters also had great scoring opportunities in the overtime. Ryleigh LaPorte, Riley Keith, Mackenzie McKay and Alice Keith all came close.

Otter Valley dominated in the early going and took a 2-0 lead.

Brittney Jackson netted the first one with 8:57 left in the first quarter with Alice Keith earning the assist.

The Yellow Jackets came close to getting the equalizer early in the second quarter but Alice Keith made a nice defensive stop on the dangerous Richardson.

The Jacks pushed hard in an effort to tie it but Morgan made a clear near the goal line in heavy traffic.

The Otters took the 1-0 lead into halftime after dominating those first 30 minutes, their 12-7 edge in penalty corners a pretty good indicator of their territorial advantage.

When McKay scored on LaPorte's assist, OV's 2-0 lead with 4:51 remaining in the third quarter looked to be pretty comfortable.

But the Jacks did not shrink. They only intensified their attack.

Meagan Holling, a force at midfield all day, had a threatening run into the circle but she was turned away on an outstanding defensive play by Marissa Connors.

But they kept attacking relentlessly and Holling drew Windsor within a goal, Amber Simonds picking up the assist.

Then came the tying goal, 4:41 before the end of regulation time. Alexina Peckinpugh scored it via Gwen Ambrose's assist.

"We knew it was going to be a tough game," coach Keith said.

Her Otters still are unbeaten at 3-0-1.

Windsor coach Jody Wood was proud of the way her Yellow Jackets battled back from the 2-0 deficit.

"I thought we made some adjustments at halftime and they just kept working," Wood said.

When asked about giving up a 2-0 lead, coach Keith simply said "endurance."

It is facet of the game the Otters are working on and an ingredient that you need with a small roster.

The 7-on-7 format presents tough decisions for the coaches when it comes to selecting the personnel to stay on the field.

"Normally, you pick your fastest people and strongest defenders," Wood said.

“But, it’ is also about who is playing well that day so it is nothing that you can plan for.”

“It’s tough, I knew our team was so gassed,” coach Keith said.

Jodie Keith had praise for the way Sydney Gallo played in the midfield area, getting in sync with Alice Keith.

Jackson, Riley and Alice Keith, LaPorte and McKay were a handful for Windsor’s defense all day but goalie Lindsey Young and her backs stood up to them, holding the fort so that the offense could get the Jackets back in the game.

Windsor, the defending Division III state champions, fall to 1-2-1 but everyone knows that you never sleep on the Yellow Jackets.

Their schedule, for one thing, is a Murderer’s Row at the beginning. They have played Burr and Burton, Division I state champion Bellows Falls and now the Otters, a team expected to contend in Division II.

Now, the Jacks must tangle with Bellows Falls again on Thursday.

Wood said it’s not ideal.

“You like to have your toughest games at the end and work up to the playoffs, but our schedule is front loaded,” she said.

The Otters travel to Brattleboro for a Saturday morning game.

tom.haley