

# Tide rolls into semifinals

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A Spaulding player waits for the final seconds to tick off the clock in the Crimson Tide's win against Otter Valley on Friday in the Division II quarterfinals.

Tom Haley / Staff Photo





A trio of Spaulding players stand on the sidelines in the final seconds of the Crimson Tide's win against Otter Valley on Friday in the Division II quarterfinals.

Tom Haley / Staff Photo

**BRANDON** — Those famous words emanated from the Spaulding High School field hockey team's post-game huddle, "Roll, Tide."

This time, the words carried no hint of a southern accent, just one big helping of Granite City pride: Fifth-seeded Spaulding had edged Otter Valley on the Otters' home field by a score of 2-1 to advance to the Division II semifinals.

Freshman Eden White scored the first goal for Spaulding with Bella Bevins earning the assist. The Crimson Tide's second score came from Bevins and was assisted by Ruby Harrington.

The first goal was a back-breaker for the Otters because they were prepared to go into the halftime in a scoreless tie.

White's goal came only a minute before the break, the type of late score that can be deflating for the team on the wrong end of it.

But the score lit a fire under the Otters. That final minute of the half they played with far more urgency, pushed the attack and played in the circle in front of Spaulding goalie Abigail Geno.

The inspired play was too late and the No. 4 seeded Otters went into the break trailing by the goal.

Some might have expected the Otters to carry that intensity into the second half. Instead, it was the Crimson Tide coming into the new half with all the energy.

"For whatever reason, we were flat today," Otter Valley coach Jodie Keith said.

The Tide's enthusiasm paid off with 11:09 left in the third quarter when Bevins' goal cushioned the lead.

Alice Kieth cut the lead in half with eight seconds remaining in the third stanza. It came via Mackenzie McKay's assist.

"We knew that when they scored, we had to play a little harder and keep our sticks lower," Spaulding coach Tabitha Lord said.

"When they got the goal we had to play stronger," Bevins said.

The Tide had to overcome a lot of adversity to win this game that pitted teams with identical 11-2-1 records.

They had to play a player down twice as the result of two two-minute penalties.

They also had to fend off some heavy pressure as is indicated by the Otters' huge (18-8) advantage in penalty corners.

But Geno and her defense were tough whenever their backs were to the wall.

"Abby doesn't usually have to face a lot of shots, but when she does she stops them," Bevins said.

Bevins was a force all day. Not only did she have a goal and an assist, but was a facilitator for the attack, playing balls into the circle all day.

Spaulding had a great opportunity to cash in when the game was still scoreless early in the second quarter. After Bevins struck her penalty corner, the Tide put the ball right back into the goal area. OV goalie Lily Morgan had four Spaulding players and the ball right on her doorstep. Somehow, the Otters dodged the bullet.

The Tide kept attacking. Harrington whistled a shot wide.

It paid off when White found the net to give Spaulding a lead it would not surrender.

It was a gorgeous day but the field was wet and soft.

"I thought we did a beautiful job of working around the field conditions," Lord said.

Lord said the message at halftime was about focusing. The Otters played with passion the final minute of the half in trying to push for the equalizer and the Tide needed to get the momentum back.

"We have beautiful passing and beautiful stick work," Lord said.

The idea was to blend all of that skill with its own passion.

"Our team came out with some intensity after the first half," Bevins said. "That is what we talked about in our circle (at the half), coming out with intensity."

It marked the end of the line for Otter Valley seniors Brittney Jackson, Riley and Alice Keith, Madison Colburn, Josephine LaRock and Marissa Connors.

The Tide's seniors Maggie Duprey, Molly Bombard, Zoe Tewksbury and Lexie Royce are looking to go out in style and that quest continues with the Division II semifinal game on Nov. 3 against No. 1 Mount Abraham.

The Tide is looking to get back to their first state title game since 2017 when they lost to Bellows Falls.