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UIS takes strides in men's soccer loss to Rockhurst

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Forgive University of Illinois Springfield Prairie Stars men's soccer coach Chad Jones for sounding like a broken record.

Throughout the preseason and now that the season has started, he continues to stress the importance of his squad "getting better each game and training session."

After losing its season opener to William Jewell 3-0 last Friday, it didn't take UIS long to put forth a better effort. The Stars led 1-0 against the Rockhurst University Hawks on Sunday in a Great Lakes Valley Conference match before Rockhurst pulled out a 2-1 win in a short-handed match at Kiwanis Field.

"We played with a lot of heart," Jones said. "We did very well. We just came out in the second half a little flat and they got one early, then we decided to play again."

Junior Brandon Belcon scored the Stars' first goal of the season on a scramble in the box after receiving the ball from UIS junior defender Peter Ottolini. With two players marking him, Ottolini was able to get a head on junior teammate Brett Schubert's long throw in and flick the ball to the far post. The Stars were ahead 16 minutes into the contest.

"It gave us a confidence boost," Belcon said. "We hadn't scored the last three games."

Five minutes after Belcon scored, Rockhurst freshman Nick McDonald tied the match with a left-footed bomb. The score remained tied 1-1 at halftime.

Rockhurst (2-0 overall, 1-0 in the GLVC) scored the game-winning goal with just 10 players on the field compared to the Stars, who had 11 players. Rockhurst sophomore Dan Frohock got a red card and was ejected less than 15 minutes into the second half.

When a player is issued a red card, a team cannot send in a substitute for that player. Rockhurst had one less player on the field the rest of the way.

"They didn't play like they were down a man," Belcon said. "They were still giving us pressure and coming hard at us."

Rockhurst's hero was Englishman Mark Magee, a freshman who fired a ground shot from 10 yards out past UIS freshman goalkeeper Jack Turanchik with 26 ½ minutes left on the clock.

"When we got 10 men, we made an adjustment or two, kept our defense strong and (UIS) had a couple good opportunities at the end, but we were able to hold it off," Rockhurst coach Tony Tocco said. "We were very, very fortunate."

The final 15 minutes were filled with multiple scoring opportunities for the Stars (0-2, 0-1).

"We adjusted our formation and tried to push some guys through," Jones said. "We tried to get a little more offensive minded to try to get that equalizer. It didn't quite work out that way. They did a good job of trying to compete. Now, we've just got to learn how to win.

"I think we definitely made some strides. That's what I'm excited about. Last year's score was 6-0 and this year it's 2-1. We're hopefully getting a little better."

Jones and Ottolini agreed that improvements on defense helped UIS against Rockhurst.

"On Friday, we weren't connecting as well as we were (Sunday)," he said. "The defense really stepped up a little better with the addition of Paul South after coach made that change.

"Each game we just keep getting better and better. I know we're going to win some games."

UIS' next game is at 7:30 p.m. Friday against Missouri S&T at Kiwanis Field.

Women fall to Rockhurst

Freshman midfielder Ashley Stariha fired four shots for the University of Illinois Springfield women's soccer team, but couldn't find the net in a 2-0 loss to Rockhurst University in a Great Lakes Valley Conference match Sunday at Kiwanis Field.

Abby Davidson and Morgan Bodreau scored goals for Rockhurst (1-1 overall, 1-0 in the GLVC) in the first half.

UIS (0-2, 0-1) hosts a GLVC contest Friday against Missouri S&T at 5 p.m.

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