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Blaine teams rack up wins at USA Cup

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Despite a tough season, the girls' U15 Blaine Chaos team played strong through the week of the USA Cup soccer tournaments and reached the playoff semifinals at the National Sports Center in Blaine. The Chaos had gone 3-0-0 and outscored opponents 9-5 in three preliminary games during the week.

"We're kind of the comeback kids," said Blaine Chaos co-coach Colleen Fletcher. "They can do anything."

The Chaos marched its way to the Medal Flight semifinals on Saturday, where the team fell short to the North Star 92 team by a score of 3-1.

The Chaos had beaten Tonka United 2-1 to advance to the quarterfinals where the Blaine team faced NLSC Ramsey Rush. Rush enjoyed a bye in the first playoff round, but the Chaos girls proved to be the comeback kids as they scored three unanswered goals to beat the Rush 3-1.

The Blaine team trailed 1-0 halfway through the first period against the Rush, but continued to work and came up with a goal off a corner kick with only minutes left to play in the half.

The Rush players had some chances in the second, but were not able to convert on another goal. With a slow roller and a top-shelf shot, the Chaos scored two big goals to take the lead for good. Fletcher was impressed with the team's comeback from being a goal down.

"[I] thought it was phenomenal," Fletcher said. "We're pretty excited. I think they can win. I think they can make it all the way."

The Chaos ended up falling short of "all the way," stopped by the North Star 92 team during their early-morning semifinal. North Star 92 finished as the runner-up in the bracket after being shut out 3-0 by champion MBSA Xtreme.

The Chaos struggled early against North Star 92, trying to keep the ball out of the Chaos zone. The Chaos players capitalized on their first big chance and took a 1-0 lead. That lead was short-lived as the Stars came right back with a goal to tie the score. The Chaos began to find life again with more chances and a shot off the goalpost, but it was the Stars who put another goal in the top corner of the net just before halftime.

The Chaos fell further into a lull in the second half, while the Stars came out strong. With the exception of a breakaway, the Chaos hardly tested the opposing goaltender. The Stars added another tally as they defeated the Chaos by a score of 3-1.

"I am very proud of you," Fletcher said to her team. "You played an excellent game."

Co-coach Todd Johnson said he thought the Chaos played "at times great, and at other times, flat-footed." Fletcher said she thought the girls were tired. She attributed this to "too much dancing" at the Grand Dance held the previous evening. Fletcher and Johnson said they were very proud of the team and that they played excellent soccer throughout the week.

Wildcats also reach semifinal round

On the boys' side, the Blaine Wildcats in the U19 "A" Playoff Trophy Flight also reached their semifinals. The Wildcats went 3-1-0 and outscored opponents 15-4 in preliminary play.

The Wildcats beat Wings JOGO 2-1 to advance to the semifinal game against Clachnacuddin FC from Scotland. Both teams came out strong in a fast-paced and competitive game. The Wildcats' defense was on its toes, playing mostly in the Blaine zone. The pressure was kept on the Blaine goalie and the Scotland squad finally struck with the game's first goal with about 25 minutes elapsed. They added another just before halftime.

Clachnacuddin FC carried its intense energy, along with lots of on-field chatter, into the second half. The Wildcats had trouble keeping control of the ball and both teams had shots sail wide or over the goal onto 109th Avenue, just missing a few cars. The Scotland team scored its third goal a few minutes into the second half, after which Wildcats coach Hollister Struck made a goaltender substitution. He said the change was about ensuring playing time for both goalies and that "they both played well."

The Wildcats had a few chances, but the Scotland squad continued to dominate the rest of the way, tacking on two more goals to finish with a 5-0 victory and a chance at the championship. Clachnacuddin FC went on to defeat SPCAA Juventus 7-4 in that game.

Struck said that the Wildcats played excellent soccer overall and that the Scotland team was just "tough to close down." The Wildcats played strong defensively and maintained possession well throughout the tournament, Struck said.

"They [the Wildcats] ran into some very good competition," the coach added.

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