

No offence, no points

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Women's soccer team fails to produce goals

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Two matches. No goals.

That was the extent of the “offensive production” turned in by the Cougars soccer team last weekend in Canada West showdowns with the top-ranked University of Alberta Pandas and their provincial counterpart, the University of Saskatchewan Huskies.

Despite their inability to find the back of the net, the Cougars managed to secure one point by playing the Pandas to a scoreless draw. The tie put an end to Alberta’s season-opening six-match winning streak, while extending the Cougars’ unbeaten streak to two matches.

The star of Saturday’s match – in which the approximate 60 km/h southerly wind gusts deposited countless leaves and garbage on the field of play – was Regina goalkeeper Michelle Anderson.

The fourth-year Business Administration student stood on her head in the second half, stopping each of the nine Alberta shots that were fired toward her. She finished with 11 saves, and many were of the spectacular variety.

In the 58th minute of play, Anderson dove to her right and stopped Alberta midfielder Christina Le’s 30 long shot on goal. Three minutes later, she made a spectacular save by diving to her left and robbing Elise Emmott of a sure goal.

The Cougar back-line also did a tremendous job of aiding their keeper by clearing many balls from the penalty area. In addition, they kept Heather Lund, who came into the contest as the Canada West co-leader in goals, off the scoresheet.

When asked about his team’s performance against the No. 1 Pandas, head coach Bob Maltman felt his squad was able to keep them from establishing any rhythm.

“I thought we played with assertiveness and determination against Alberta,” he said.” We defended quite well from front to back and got stuck into tackles in an effective manner.”

Unfortunately, Maltman felt his team was not as consistent against Pandas as they were versus the Huksies and that was evident in the final score: a 3–0 Huskies victory.

“Against the U of S, we were not as composed as we needed to be with the ball at our feet,” explained Maltman. “We were guilty of trying to force balls when simple passes were available and this led to us giving the ball away many times.

“Some of our players that need to play well didn’t play well. We need players who will rise to the occasion and not back off with the opportunity to be a showcase in front of the home crowd.”

The Huskies made good on a pair of defensive blunders by the Cougars in the opening half of Sunday’s match.

Elizabeth Hudon drew first blood for her squad in the 28th minute when she rushed hard to the net – splitting a trio of Regina defenders – and deposited a loose ball behind Anderson.

Two minutes later Daniela Fuenzalida ran up the left flank – past two defenders – and netted her fifth goal of the season from 15 yards out.

Hudon would later tally her second goal of the match, with a wicked strike that had eyes only for the top left corner of the goal.

Huskies keeper and Prince Albert native Alicia Middlebrook made three saves for her second shutout in as many days.

“It’s a disappointment for our campus, our team ... and for all the people who gave up two hours of their time to come and watch that performance,” said Maltman.

The loss to Saskatchewan dropped the Cougars to 2–4–2, leaving them eighth in the conference standings.

Although the Cougars’ goal of recording six victories in 2010 is still possible, Maltman knows it will be an uphill climb, especially after Sunday’s loss.

In order to achieve that goal, however, the Cougars must find ways to create quality scoring chances.

“We need to work effectively at getting balls into the 18-yard box with players running into positions for a chance to score, as opposed to hopeful balls from 35 or 40 yards out,” noted Maltman.

Regina has a bye this weekend, but will return to action on Oct. 16, where they will be looking for the season sweep of the University of Calgary Dinos. They battle the University of Lethbridge Pronghorns the next day. Both games start at 12 p.m., at Cougars/Rams Field.