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Marshfield 2-0 in MWL after dramatic victory

By John Gunther, Sports Editor

COOS BAY — Marshfield's magical start to the boys soccer season took another dramatic leap forward Wednesday night when the Pirates beat North Eugene 3-2 at Pete Susick Stadium.

A Marshfield team that didn't win any league games the past two seasons suddenly is 2-0 in league and 5-1 overall. Not only are the Pirates winning, but Wednesday they beat a traditional league powerhouse by coming from behind in the second half.

"It's amazing," said Chad Statham, one of the team's captains and defensive leaders.

Marshfield hasn't won two league games since the current seniors were freshmen, and the Pirates won just twice that year. Statham thinks this team is pretty special, as evident by Wednesday's comeback.

"We can just keep fighting the whole time," he said. "We never give up. We do so much conditioning. All that conditioning is paying off."

The Pirates used that conditioning to rally after two North Eugene goals early in the second half gave the Highlanders the lead, but the enduring image from the match likely will be a frantic few moments in front of North Eugene's goal with four minutes remaining that resulted in several players on the turf with injuries.

The most serious of those ailments was suffered by Tyler Graves, who was injured in a play that resulted in



Pirate Eike Behrens raises his hands in the air after scoring in the first half against North Eugene on Wednesday night in a Midwestern League soccer match. World Photo by Lou Sennick.

Marshfield's winning penalty kick by Gatlon Giorgis.

The action started on the other end of the pitch, where North Eugene had a corner kick. The Pirates cleared the ball and Ho Chun Lee raced downfield with it on a breakaway up the left side. When he reached North Eugene's end, he sent a crossing pass toward the goal, which was deflected by North Eugene goalie Adam Knight. In the chase for the ball, Graves was knocked to the ground and a North Eugene player fell on him.

When play was blown dead, Knight was on the ground in pain in front of the goal and Graves was on the turf, eventually carried off and then taken to Bay Area Hospital, where X-rays on his knee showed no break. He was to receive an MRI on the knee today, Marshfield coach Tony Preston said.

North Eugene's players protested the foul, but the Pirates were awarded the penalty kick because it happened in the box, and Giorgis beat Knight with a kick just inside the left post.

"I was really nervous (before the kick)," Giorgis said.

But he soon was celebrating with teammates, both after the kick and again when the final whistle ended the match.

Several North Eugene players swore about the officiating as they walked off the pitch, and there was a long delay before they calmed down enough for the customary handshake between the teams.

Preston said he could understand their frustration, but added that he thought the match was evenly officiated.

"We got some lucky calls, I'm not going to lie about it," he said, though he felt the last foul was a good call. "They had some calls go against them. We had some calls go against us."

He added that Marshfield has been on the other side of calls that cost the Pirates matches in the past.

The scene after the game did not detract from Marshfield's excitement over the victory or the successful start to the season.

"We're at a high right now," Giorgis said. "We just need to keep doing what we're doing."

"I'm ecstatic," Preston said. "They play their hearts out. This team has great chemistry. They work hard. That shows in the win tonight that they won't quit."

Marshfield had a 1-0 halftime lead, courtesy of a goal by Eike Behrens in the 25th minute. After a Marshfield throw-in, he knocked in a ball that was loose in front of the net.

North Eugene responded with two goals early in the second half.

Drew Shidaker scored the first on a direct kick from about 30 yards out after the Pirates were called for a hand ball, curving the ball into the upper right corner of the net over the outstretched arms of Marshfield goalie Zaq Jones in the 46th minute.

In the 53rd minute, Nathan Crooks sent a long pass over Marshfield's defenders and Fortino Vasques ran it down and pushed the ball past Jones into the right side of the net to put the Highlanders up 2-1.

Marshfield evened the score in the 64th minute. After a North Eugene penalty, Richie Richmond kicked the ball from the left wing and Statham deflected it off his shoulder into the net.

"I thought Ho was going to get it, and he ducked," Statham said.

Statham pulled up from his customary defensive position because of the potential for an offensive attack in front of the goal. For most of the rest of the match, he was helping stymie North Eugene's offense.

"We have a good defensive half," Giorgis said, referring to Statham, Travis Gross and Tyler Leach.

Preston said he had increased expectations for the Pirates this year and so far they are living up to them.

"Win or lose, I'm proud of them," he said. "So far, it's been winning."

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