

Sep. 28 Girls Soccer



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Hamilton's Selina Cifelli (right) battles Nottingham's Vanessa Zottoli for the ball during today's township classic at West (Photo by John Blaine/purchase photos by e-mailing jbsportphoto@aol.com).

Barlow's kicks back 'Stars in a corner as Hornets rally for victory

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

Sep. 28: Sam Barlow doesn't know how she does it.

But she does it well.

Barlow delivered two perfect corner kicks that ignited a furious comeback today as the Hamilton West girls' soccer team rallied for a 3-2 victory over visiting Nottingham.

It snapped a six-game winless streak for the Hornets (2-5-1), who had not won since a 10-0 drubbing of Trenton opening day.

"This is awesome," said Barlow. "We've been fighting every single game and we couldn't put them away. But today, we were playing our rivals and we knew we could do it."

"It's pretty sweet," said Allyson Prekop, who scored the winning goal with 11:53 left. "I definitely think we can build off of this game."

Hamilton built precious little for the first 50 minutes, as free kick first-half goal by Kristina Ragolia was followed by a great individual effort score Dana Davies to start the second half.

With the Northstars (0-7) holding a 2-0 lead and Hamilton having generated no quality shots for the first 50 minutes, it looked like it could finally be Nottingham's day.

But then came the Hornets' biggest rally in years.

With 25:06 remaining, Barlow sent a perfect corner high into the box that Colleen Murphy headed into the back of the net.

Seven minutes later, Stephanie Sparano sprung Loran Wyrrough on a breakaway but goalie Chelsea Toscano made a lunging save to preserve the slim lead. But with 14:32 left, Barlow curled a corner kick from the left side that deflected off the post and then off a Nottingham player to tie it.

"She serves a beautiful ball," praised Nottingham coach Elyse Diamond.

"We could throw a dime in the middle of the field and she could hit it 10 out of 10 times off a corner, it's incredible," West coach Anthony Tessein said. "The frustrating thing for us as a team is she does it every game and we never put it in. Finally, we get two goals off corner kicks.

"We've been working on it quite a bit. It's nice to see something you work on actually pay off in a game."

Barlow doesn't know where her skills came from when it comes to corners.

"I don't know, really," the sophomore midfielder said. "I just focus on it, and find someone that can get a head on it. I do work on it a lot."

There was still work to do in the game, and the Hornets got extra support when the football team came over from practice to root them on (complete with the wave!).

With 11:53 left, Barlow blasted a shot that Toscano saved. Wyrrough smacked the rebound but it was deflected, and Prekop calmly launched the game-winner.

"The football team picked me up a little bit," she said with a smile.

"Sam's been in the middle of everything this year," Tessein said. "But besides Sam, every single one of them worked hard.

"Allyson scored that gigantic goal. She didn't play in the first half, she comes on, plays great and puts it away like a pro. I couldn't be happier for her."

To Nottingham's credit, they battled back and had several dangerous opportunities that the Hamilton defense kept at bay.

It was truly a game of momentum shifts and the Hornets felt Murphy's goal was their spark.

"After that we just all got hyped up," Barlow said. "We knew we were in it and we could do it."

Tessein hoped that was the case.

"You could tell after that first goal we were definitely gonna make it tough on them for the rest of the game," Tessein said. "The way this season has gone, I couldn't say we were definitely gonna score, but I was very confident that once the second one went in, that the third one was coming."

It was undeniably a huge win for Hamilton, which is suddenly unbeaten in two games after Monday's tie at West Windsor-Plainsboro South. When the buzzer sounded, the Hornets mobbed each other in a pile on the ground.

"We've had some issues with the girls," Tessein said. "A couple times it seemed like they don't want to be here. But you saw the emotion today. They were pumped, they were excited."

And they are hoping that this could be the start of something nice.

"I think we can build on this," said Barlow, who plays with several Northstars on the Hibernian Fusion. "We know now that we can come out of a game like this with a win."

"Hopefully it's a confidence boost," Tessein said. "We've been stressing that we've been playing pretty good soccer and the bounces weren't going our way and eventually it would happen."

"They've been patient and continued to work hard, that's what I wanted them to do. I didn't want them to get down on themselves. Today it looked bad but they continued to work hard. They didn't get down on themselves and the bounces started going our way."

As did some perfectly placed corner kicks by Barlow.

However the heck she does it.

Steinert's Boucher-Wagner connection clicks in win over Hopewell

It seems like when Darah Wagner scores a goal, she's getting set up by Adrianna Boucher.

That combination worked well today, Wagner scored two goals and both came off assists from "Boosh" in Steinert's 3-1 victory at Hopewell in a battle of CVC powers still looking to find themselves.

For good measure, Boucher also assisted on a goal by Corey Smith as Steinert took a 3-0 lead before HoVal got a late goal.

Briyanna Femia had eight saves for the Spartans (4-3-1), who won their second straight. Hopewell slipped to 1-6.