

Sep. 9 Field Hockey

Cicale happy with 'Stars effort in los, including stellar effort by Muzioni

By Rich Fisher

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Sep. 9: The Jen Cicale Era of Nottingham High field hockey didn't begin with a win, but it began with a smile.

"I'm extremely happy with how we played," said Cicale after her Northstars dropped a 1-0 decision to Princeton in today's belated season opener. "Our defense played really well.

"We moved some girls around, made a lot of changes and we moved around our front line before we started. So I was really excited with how we moved the ball out of the defensive zone and how we marked up."

The fact Nottingham could keep it close against a program that is usually pretty solid is a good sign of progress. Last year's opener produced a 6-0 loss to the Little Tigers.

The first half was fairly evenly played as each goalie made three saves. Princeton held possession for long stretches but midway through the half the Northstars began to hold the ball and pressure the goal.

Late in the half Lyndsey Buckley had a shot right in front that the Tigers goalie made a strong save on.

After intermission, however, Princeton began to dominate and held the ball for most of the half in the Nottingham end.

"We get tired," Cicale said. "We're lacking subs, so I used my timeouts in the second half to try and get some legs under us.

"My midfielders run, runs run and they're never in on corners so we get multiple corners called and we get tired. Then we lose our legs and we can't come back 25 to 25 (yard lines)."

Princeton's possession finally paid off with 15:01 remaining when Emma Crain scored out of a scramble in front.

"It was like a mosh pit in there on that one," sophomore goalie Amanda Muzioni said with a laugh.

That would be the only goal scored all day, however, as Muzioni was outstanding in her first varsity start. She made 10 saves, including seven in the second half when Princeton was teeing off.

"She's really good back there," Cicale said. "She seems nervous but she gets back there and makes amazing clears. I'm used to goalies kicking the ball two feet and she clears the ball out from the circle."

Muzioni admitted she was nervous, but got rid of the butterflies after making her first save. She played JV last year and saw a little time on varsity.

Her conditioning is improved this season after attending a summer weight training camp at Notre Dame, and her skills looked sharp.

"I really didn't know anything about Princeton," she said. "I was just reacting to the shots. I'm pretty happy with how I played."

Aside from the goalie's strong play, Cicale was also pleased with how Nottingham adjusted to a lineup change that dropped Aisha Torres from forward to right fullback.

"I put her back on defense and my team's really good at switching," Cicale said. "So if one girl has a run, she'll run down the sidelines so I'll have my fullback making a run up the sideline and have

my middle drop and pick up for her. They worked really well at switching.

“Once I put her back there, she’ll start to bring the ball out and clear it out to the sideline instead of coming across the middle or losing the ball. With her speed, putting her on the right side gives her the extra advantage of already being on the stick side and then she can just take it and go.”

And while Nottingham didn’t take a win and go today, they certainly took some good things out of the experience.