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Sports

GIRLS WATER POLO: North Penn routs Souderton

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For The Reporter

TOWAMENCIN — Katie Patterson smiled when the subject of North Penn's tenacious defense came up in conversation after Wednesday's water polo match against archrival Souderton.

"I'm not going to lie — they make my life easier," the Maidens' standout goalie said.

The Maidens' suffocating defense never allowed the Indians to get their offense untracked, and when Souderton did manage a shot, Patterson — who had 12 saves — was there to stop it as the defending state champions rolled to a convincing 8-1 win.

"We just press up a lot, and we really try to work on our angles," said Patterson. "The defense is really a team, and it's all about teamwork and communication and having the heart to do it. Our team definitely has heart, and we pride ourselves on our defense."

There's no mistaking that the battle between the neighboring rivals gets the competitive juices flowing on both sides.

"This is the biggest (match) in our league," Maiden senior Lindsay Musoleno said. "They're our biggest rival, and you always want to go into it strong as a team."

On the other side of the pool, acting coach Katie Farrell tipped her hat to the Maidens' defense.

"They just press out on us, and they shut down our offense by keeping us outside," she said. "Our girls needed to drive, but we just kept working it around the outside."

Farrell went on to credit goalie Kara Stegman as well as her defense, which was led by the efforts of Bronwyn Smith and Laureana Zrada.

Stegman — who has been asked to fill the shoes of All-American Missy Doll — turned away nine shots, several at point-blank range.

"Our defense kept up with them for the kind of game that it was," Farrell said. "That's probably the best our goalie has played.

"There were 24 shots taken on her, and only eight went in, and most of them were in the beginning of the game from their offensive hole."

The Maidens struck early when Alex Kajari (Brittany Peterson assist) scored less than two minutes into the match. They went on top 2-0 after Mary Morris — who led the Maidens with four goals — turned a Brooke Else pass into a goal.

Musoleno (Morris assist) found the net midway through the second period, sending the Maidens into halftime with a 3-0 lead.

The Maidens' rock solid defense, according to coach Bill Bartle, is the result of a lot of hours in the water.

"They do a lot of legwork, especially in the month of August preparing for the season," the Maidens' coach said. "At this time of year, they're still pretty much doing a great deal of training.

"They'll start tapering off two weeks prior to when they are peaking for the end of the year tournaments."

Another Musoleno goal at the 4:58 mark of the third quarter - again with a Morris assist - made it a 4-0 game, and according to Musoleno, who orchestrates the Maidens' attack from her offensive hole position, the key to generating attack is acting quickly.

"It's difficult because you usually have six people coming in on you, and that's where you have to rely on your teammates to call for the ball, so you can pop it out to them," Musoleno said. "It has to be quick. You see that ball, and you want to put it in the back of the net - you better grab it and put it in the back of the net."

The Maidens used back-to-back goals by Else and Morris (Else assist) to go on top 6-0 after three quarters.

"As long as we all talk to each other and let each other know what we're going to do, we can play pretty smoothly, and we can follow through with plays," Musoleno said. "The key was knowing where everybody was.

"If the defender came in to take away the hole, the hole had to know to pop it out. If somebody outside was open, they had to know to shoot. It's definitely teamwork."

The Indians broke up the Maidens' shutout bid when Monica Stiles scored at the 6:30 mark of the fourth quarter, but a minute later with the Indians down a swimmer, Morris connected for her third goal of the afternoon.

Morris closed out the scoring with a goal in the closing minutes for the 8-1 final.

"I could definitely tell they were trying to get really hungry to get that ball in the hole," Patterson said of the Indians. "You could start to see it in the third and fourth quarters, but we did a good job of fending them off and staying strong."

"As the game went on, one of the things that helped us was our depth," Bartle said. "We were able to wear them down a little bit, but I never take anything for granted when I play Souderton."

While the Indians fell to 8-2 on the season, the Maidens improved to 13-2, and Bartle credited his senior captains - Morris, Patterson and Musoleno - for bringing this young team together.

"I was pleased with some of our younger players tonight," he said. "The last few years we have been senior-dominated, but this year we're looking at the sophomore class and saying they have to perform right away. It's not given them an opportunity to develop, but they're coming along well, and our leadership has been really strong."

In boys' action, North Penn notched a convincing 13-3 win over Souderton. Goalie Jeremy Smith turned away 13 shots in a solid outing.

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