

October 10, 11, 2009

Maroon Wave Compete in Jack Walsh Memorial Tournament

Abington, PA (ACU) - The U14 Girls Maroon squad participated in the local Columbus Day weekend tournament run by local club, Hunter Soccer Club. The weekend games were held at Junior High School fields and were played under a variety of conditions in competitive fashion.

On Saturday, October 11, 2009 the Wave rolled into the Jr. High complex for a 10am game with two players on the Injured Reserve (I/R), Midfielder Maria Campion and Defender Nina Fakolujo both would be missed. This left the team with 15 healthy players under gray cold skies to play their first game. Friendly local opponent Fox Chase Soccer Club was the opposition for game 1. This was the first year that the Maroon Wave would not face FC in divisional play after playing them 3 times in 2008. Many of the players are classmates in school so it added to the fun and competition

Maddie Bavis was solid in the net, coming out and playing the angles, letting loose long, strong punts into the midfield. The defensive third worked tirelessly and mathematically to take away any Fox Chase opportunities. Erin Flach ran the defense as the Sweeper and tracked down many of the long passes sent into the ACU defense. Maura Gouak tackled strongly and communicated well- taking time at both Stopper and outside. MacKenzie Beltz deftly handled all that came her way and created opportunities throughout the game with transitional runs to set up the offense. Sierra Krohnemann pushed up the field at Stopper to cut off the FC challenges when she was not on the outside shutting down the touchline and making long throw ins.

Rain, cold rain started late in the first half and made the field slick and made the ball skip on the grass so playing the ball became more of a challenge. The half ended 0-0. Bavis and Gouak exchanged positions. In the second half the midfield of Veronica Asman, Emily Rankin, Colleen Lavelle, Yegene Hong or Gabby Ferruzzi was able to play the punts of Gouak up into the offensive third while calmly controlling the long punts of the FC goalkeeper. The game also became more physical- clean always, but physical and the rain didn't help.

Caitlin Kushnir played her normal game of toughness mixed with skill on the outside at Forward, Anna Hallahan, Kelsey Travor and Jessie Levin or Carolyn Lyons completed the front line and were also supplemented by Rankin at times.

Late in the game the Maroon Wave made a strong push up the left sideline with Hallahan bringing in a feed from Rankin before crossing the ball at about the 6 yard line toward a streaking Asman. The weather was a thief, the wet ball combined with the wet grass made the ball take a fast skip just before Asman could tag it, going harmlessly out of bounds with 20 seconds left in the game. A 0-0 tie was the final result and the girls would get ready for their 2pm game.

The 2pm game was against the Warrington Earthquakes, a big strong team that the Wave had played back in the Spring of 2009, although the Maroon Wave only had 9 of their own players in uniform that day - so this was the first real game. The weather had changed from rainy and wet to intermittent sun with a strong wind of 8-10mph that would blow through the field West to East. Maddie Bavis stood confidently between the goalposts for the opening tap.

In front of Bavis was the Left to Right wall of Krohnemann, Flach (sweeper), Gouak (stopper) and Beltz. None would get an opportunity for a substitute in game 2- all would play with fortitude and heart. All played strongly and athletically, here and there they would sneak a smile, enjoying a job well done- encouraging their line mates. All the while doing the most important thing...having fun playing the game.

Coaches McCartin and Rankin rotated personnel in the midfield and offensive third to try to offset the physical play from the Earthquakes. The ball was moved up and down the field efficiently if not gracefully for the entire first half. Bavis took excellent position and made several key saves. The half ended 0-0

In the second half Maura Gouak reported as the Goalkeeper and Bavis moved out to left back, while "Bob," Sierra Krohnemann took up residence at Stopper. Play continued to be physical with Cushnir and Hallahan getting bounced around cleanly by the opposition. Late in the half Emily Rankin came in at Striker to relieve Anna Hallahan. In the 40th minute of the tournament shortened 50 minute game, Sweeper Erin Flach calmly played a ball to her right and let a Warrington player run by and went straight into the midfield before lofting a 20yd flighted pass that Rankin settled on her first touch then blew by the last defender. As the Earthquakes keeper started to come out to cut down the angle Emmy hammered a well placed shot over the goalie's right shoulder and into the upper left side of the net.

The score held up as the midfield clamped down hard, lead by Veronica Asman to take away any reasonable charge into the AC United defensive third.

On Sunday the girls had to report for a 9am game. The Maroon Wave is more of a Maroon puddle at any time before 10am so the game against Lansing SC would be a challenge. This would mark the 3rd straight game against a physical team. The girls needed just a tie to advance to the Championship for the second year in a row. Maura Gouak strode out to man the goal, facing a high rising sun that was in her eyes for the entire first half. The wind was calm; the bench was short with only 3 substitutes available. Forward Kelsey Travor combined with midfielder Colleen Lavelle to drive deeply into the right side of the Lansing defense but couldn't manage a shot.

Lansing managed to intercept an clearing pass about 40 yards out and played a ball nicely to the penalty arc where a player in full flight was able to create space a deposit a shot and Lansing was up 1-0.

Late in the half, after Erin Flach made the same deft move as the day before, she sent an almost identical pass to Rankin. Emily was able to get past the last defender and it was a de' je vu moment. At about the 18 yd line the ball took an unfriendly bounce just before the shot causing it to travel just wide to the right. In the 38th minute Kelsey Travor went down with an injury that stopped play. Gabby Ferruzzi came on and played strongly in the midfield after Lavelle was pushed to forward to replace Travor.

With only 2 minutes remaining in the game Anna Hallahan took the ball up the same left sideline as she did in the Fox Chase game- this time in dry weather. All of the AC United faithful were on their feet, our club brethren from several teams were there joining in the excitement, and as Rankin went to the near post and Carolyn Lyons went toward the back post, Hallahan crossed the ball. In what seemed like endless slow motion the ball...came...across...the...6 yd line...and nobody could get to it. Eventually, Veronica Asman got a foot on it but the box was packed and the no one could get a shot off. The game ended 0-1 but was very exciting and evenly played.

In the end the Maroon Wave played 3 games and allowed only 1 goal which was outstanding. In winning their second game of the tournament they defeated a team from an upper division while playing with a short bench due to injuries and illness. The girls made corrections to their game after every half and improved as the tournament progressed. The best statistic was the one that was not on the stat sheet, the immeasurable joy of the game that registered on the player's faces and those of their families.' The tournament brought several people from the township together from almost all of the AC United Soccer Club who joined each other and supported as many of our teams as possible. Once again, truly Abington Community United Soccer Club and the U14's were glad to be a part of that weekend.