

HOMESTEAD 7, WEST BEND WEST 1



Photos by Russ Pulvermacher

Left, Homestead senior Jack Gruen, No. 7, knocks down and attempts to control an inbound pass Thursday against West Bend West. **Right**, Yaseen Khaled plays the ball up field in front of West Bend West's Teddy Danaher. The Highlanders earned a 7-1 victory in the North Shore Conference match.

Watzka gets the fun kick started

Highlanders improve to 4-0 in NSC with win at West Bend West

By Kelly Feng
Special to the News Graphic

WEST BEND — Josh Watzka was on fire, scoring the game's first goal at the three-minute mark.

That set the stage for the Homestead boys soccer team to earn a 7-1 victory Thursday during a North Shore Conference match at West Bend West.

Fourteen minutes later, Watzka's fast play enabled an assist to junior forward Jack Gruen, leading to Homestead's second goal of the match.

"I feel like our team right now we're meshing well, and we've gone through kind of an exodus of tactically and the way we bonded over it over the season we're feeling very good," Watzka said.

Watzka's big night continued in the 19th minute when he struck for another goal, assisted by sophomore forward Lucas Mersky.

Homestead continued to attack and was rewarded in the 24th minute when West Bend West sophomore defender Grant Walter booted in an own goal.

Despite the excitement, Watzka remained unfazed.

"Right now we're just focusing on every next game, and of course, we want to be able to win our conference, want to really push for stuff like that and hopefully make a run in this year's playoffs."

The second goal meant the most to the junior midfielder, especially when it came back across the top of

the box. Watzka said he enjoys pursuits like that, but in the end, the most important thing was getting a win for the team.

Homestead head coach Tony Navarre is proud his team is talking about improving their game and then playing out those ideas.

Navarre referenced a conference game earlier in the week when Homestead earned a 4-1 victory at Slinger. While the Highlanders won, they talked about game aspects they could work on, like their midfield spacing and ensuring they could connect passes using their central midfielders.

The Highlanders returned to Wednesday's practice and worked on those details, which they put into use during Thursday's game.

"I think they executed really well. The first 40 minutes for us, the first 20 specifically, with our guys out there executing what we were trying to do, it was nice to see," Navarre said.

After halftime, the visitor's momentum continued. Senior mid-fielder Khristian Hoard scored with an assist by Jack Gruen, bringing the score to 5-0.

If that wasn't enough to galvanize the Highlanders to the end, senior midfielder Jacob Bakalisky scored the sixth goal, in the 51st minute, assisted by sophomore midfielder defender Allen Wild.

Homestead's streak was briefly interrupted when the Spartans came alive, with junior forward Franklin Kunfira

scoring in the 56th minute.

Wrapping up the last five minutes of the game, Wild notched the final goal of the match with a solid finish in the box off a great pass by senior defender Holden Smith.

West head coach James Danaher reflected on the Highlanders' win.

"We're in the same conference as Homestead, but they're in a different league. They just dominated the play. They're a very good team," the Spartans coach said. "I think they will go very far at the end of the season and the playoffs. I think they will vie for the conference championship."

After the game, he told his players to view Homestead as an example of how to play the game.

Danaher was pleased with little victories, mentioning Ryan Spaeth and how his midfielder was under constant pressure. The coach referenced junior goalkeeper Jimmy O'Connell's contributions as well.

Homestead improved to 7-1 with the triumph, which gave Navarre confidence — and nostalgia.

"It's just such a fun team, and this group of freshmen I started with when I started at Homestead as a head coach," he said, reflecting on the years they worked together and bonded.

"They're just a really fun group of guys and the team chemistry is fun, and we laugh a lot, and practices are enjoyable, and the team gets along well."

CEDARBURG 7, WEST BEND EAST 0

Putting practice tips into action

Bulldogs sweep East by focusing on what shots to hit and when

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CEDARBURG — The Cedarburg girls tennis team viewed a North Shore Conference dual meet Tuesday against West Bend East as a perfect opportunity to take lessons from practice and put them into use in competition.

The Bulldogs were successful in that venture, securing a 7-0 victory over the Suns in which each match was won in straight sets. The team dropped just six total games along the way.

"They've got to use today as kind of more of a learning experience, trying to learn what shots we should be hitting and serves and every part of the game," Cedarburg head coach Logan Symes said, noting the Bulldogs were coming off playing some powerful teams and the meet against the Suns served as a chance to refine some things. "It's what they needed."

Ava Andrea spent her match in the top singles flight working on a few things that helped her earn a 6-1, 6-0 victory.

"Definitely going up to the net more and working on my volleys and placing the ball more," she explained. "I've got to use more in matches because that really benefits you."

Andrae added that it is a bit of an adjustment because of the way singles players typically prefer to play.

"Singles players usually like staying at the baseline. That's where they're comfortable at, just hitting their ground strokes," she explained. "But when you go up to the net, it really benefits you

because you can just put away shots. First though, you've got to work the ball, work the point, and once you hit it in a deep corner, and they just pop it up, then that's your time to hit a winner."

Symes is pleased with the way Andrae has embraced that part of the game and incorporated it into a strength.

"I've been kind of leaning on her a little bit more trying to say get up to the net. Especially in girls high school tennis, you could sit there and hit ground strokes all day, but at the same time, you've got to be able to finish the point," he said. "If you can finish the point at the net, it just makes your life that much easier."

"From the beginning of the season until now, it's been much better. I've been kind of leaning on her a little bit more trying to say get up to the net."

Cedarburg completed the sweep in singles play with Libby Plante (No. 2), Lauren O'Leary (No. 3) and Meri O'Leary (No. 4) each taking their matches by a 6-0, 6-0 score.

"All three of them are playing really good this season. All of them have a winning record. They all listen really well. They give a very good effort when they're out there," Symes said. "The biggest thing is moving our feet, have a lot of energy and just stay more focused on not just the end result, but each point individually."

He was also pleased with the way each player adjusted to the opposition.

"You've got to kind of change your game style a little bit when someone



Photo by Mark Justesen

Cedarburg senior Ava Andrea hits a return shot Thursday during a meet against West Bend East. She won her match in the first singles flight by a score of 6-1, 6-0.