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Naperville Central's Shoemaker quick on the draw



Caitlin Donohue of Barrington collides with Fremd's McClain Purdy during Barrington vs. Fremd girls lacrosse. (Bob Chwedyk | Staff Photographer)

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Naperville Central junior midfielder Megan Shoemaker doesn't waste any time making an impact in games.

"I take the draws," she said. "I like doing that. It's really fun. I like how it starts off the game. It's a really crucial part of the game."

Shoemaker explained the key to winning a draw has a lot to do with repetition.

"It's mostly more about making sure you get to the same spot every time so your teammates can get the ball first," she said. "You have to make sure you are positioned correctly and apply the right amount of force."

Shoemaker is no different than many Illinois girls high school lacrosse players in terms of when she picked up the sport.

"I've been playing since freshman year," she said. "I wanted to get involved in high school and thought lacrosse would be a lot of fun. I like how everything is a team effort. You don't have to be a star player and you can still do well."

Shoemaker's biggest improvement has been in the fundamentals department.

"Things like making sure you catch and throw before you think about doing other things," she explained.

In terms of Naperville Central's improvement, Shoemaker had an immediate answer.

"We have been meshing as a team," she said. "We're getting better at transitioning the ball down the field and making sure we are helping everyone out. We know each other's strengths. We're working together as a team. We've come together for the common goal of winning."

Barrington wins Mid-Suburban:The Fillies moved to 10-5 recently after a pair of wins over Libertyville (13-7) and Lyons Township (14-12 in overtime) and a 12-5 victory over Fremd that clinched the Mid-Suburban League title.

"It was an exciting night for all of the seniors and also a great night to celebrate being conference champs," Barrington coach Suzanne Rich said.

Senior captain MacKenzie McPike racked up 7 ground balls, 5 draw controls and added 2 caused turnovers. She's No. 1 in the state in ground balls.

Seniors Caitlin Donohue and Maryann Thompson each had 4 goals in the win. Senior Alicia Kholamian and junior Jaqueline Pisani each had 2 goals. Barrington went undefeated in conference play.

Through late last week, junior midfielder-attacker Chista Madden continued to lead the team in scoring. She had 44 goals and 9 assists through late last week. Donohue had 27 goals and 12 assists, while Thompson had 18 goals and 17 assists.

Rich was especially pleased with the win against Libertyville at home. Meaghan Carley, Julia Huldin and Maggie DeVecchio were standouts on defense.

"Our defense has learned to quickly read the opposing team's offense and make the necessary adjustments to shut them down," Rich said. "Their strong communication and ability to work well together has made a big difference in winning some crucial games."

The overtime win against Lyons served as an additional confidence booster.

"This was a major win, again showing that we are capable of competing and beating some of the top lacrosse teams," Rich said.

Madden had 5 goals in the game. Thompson, McPike and Sarah Hovde each had 2 goals. Jaqueline Holdsberg, Gabby Miles and Kate Allison each had 1 goal.

Coyle gets the job done for Wheaton: Wheaton United senior attacker Kaity Coyle keeps herself plenty busy on the field.

"I love it," the Wheaton United captain said. "I love running around. I love scoring goals. I feel fortunate that I can do that for my team and be a part of all of this."

Coyle has been hard at work improving her transition game.

"I have to play defense all the way back to the restraining line so you're playing defense and attacking at both ends," she said.

So what's the toughest part of playing the attack position?

"Trying to lose a defender when you are trying to score a goal," Coyle said. "You usually have a stick right in your face. It's not fun."

Coyle will continue her lacrosse career at Division II Tennessee Wesleyan.

"I'm extremely excited about it," she said. "I'm the first girl on the team to get a lacrosse scholarship."

In terms of Wheaton's success this year, the Wheaton North senior agreed with coach Charles Solomon's blue-collar, hard-working assessment of the team.

"That is totally true," Coyle said. "Our defense works well together and the same with our attack. Our success is all spread out. We do a lot of passing. We get a lot of assists. Around here assists are just as important as goals. We do a lot of team bonding. We've played together for so long. We know our strengths and

weaknesses. If someone gets down, we're all there to pump her back up. We're all really close."

Which made a recent win over Marian Catholic even more special.

"That was a really big win for us," said Coyle.

Rose for MVP? Palatine junior Rose Silveira has no problem finding the back of the net. She had 44 goals through the Pirates' first 13 games.

But you won't find her talking about herself too much. She prefers to talk about the team.

"The team is improving dramatically," she said. "We've all come together very nicely and have been working hard. We've focused on both defense and offense. Everything has been put together and we're really starting to click. Our transitions from defense to offense are getting better. The whole team has come together."

A high level of team camaraderie doesn't hurt either.

"I like how well we get along with each other," Silveira said. "We have a lot of fun playing together."

Silveira has been playing since freshman year. Her brother, Jamey (who played for four years), introduced her to the sport.

Now, Silveira is focused on helping get Palatine ready for the postseason.

"We want to do the best we can the rest of the season and get as far as we can in the playoffs," she said.

Tobin learns quickly for St. Charles: St. Charles co-op senior attacker Bridget Tobin picked up the game in middle school.

"My sister (Maureen) was a few years older and played and really liked the sport," Tobin said. "I like how lacrosse is different than other sports. You don't have to be playing it from when you were in kindergarten. I've always liked soccer and I've been able to incorporate some things I liked about soccer. I like running and I liked playing defense."

This is Tobin's first year playing attack.

"I used to play defense," she said. "I've been trying to focus on bringing the ball up to score. I was not comfortable with that in the beginning because I was a defender. As the year has gone on, I've had more confidence with that. It's started to get better. I was always passing more than shooting and I still do. I am getting better."

Sometimes she admits she does have defensive withdrawal symptoms.

"I hate being back on offense and seeing the defense and not being there playing defense. I love defense," Tobin laughed.

But Tobin added she has become more accustomed to the nuances of the attacking position.

"I've been working hard at getting away from defenders and getting open and getting into good position to take a shot," she said. "We play teams that use zone defense and that makes it a lot more challenging."

Tobin will continue her academic career at West Virginia University.

"They don't have a school lacrosse team. They have club, so I'll probably play club," said Tobin, who plans on majoring in elementary education. "My whole

family went there and my brother and sister go there. It's a fun school."

St. Charles had a slew of games cancelled by the abundant foul spring weather, which Tobin noted has created some urgency.

"We had a lot of games cancelled," Tobin said. "We need to win some games coming up. We need to play as a team and work our hardest and focus. These next few weeks are the most important."

Vernon Hills update: The Cougars were only 1-8 through their first nine games, but coach Bob Thompson is seeing plenty of progress.

"Right now our offense is getting better. We took 12 shots in a game and scored eight," he said. "Our shooting is getting better."

Vernon Hills has five seniors on the team, while the rest of the roster is comprised of juniors.

"We lost our two goalies earlier in the season," Thompson said. "One moved to Michigan and one quit. It's been a goalie by committee. We're playing a different goalie almost every game. We don't have a No. 1 goalie."

Senior Erin Steele returned from injury recently.

"She tore her ankle up the first game of the season," Thompson said. "She's only been able to play the last three or four games. A couple of injuries have hurt us that way."

Junior midfielders Jihee Choi and Christie Currie have been two bright spots for the Cougars.

"Jihee has played some lacrosse for some elite travel teams," Thompson noted. "She can control the ball well. She's averaging about three goals a game. Chrissie

averaged about 2.5 goals a game."

Lauren Hernandez, averaging 3.5 assists, also has played well.

"The first couple of games we lost by 10 and we lost one by 12. We lost to Glenbrook North 12-9 and lost in overtime to Stevenson 12-10," Thompson said. "We're getting better."

Palatine update: The Pirates were 8-5 through late last week after recording wins over Vernon Hills (18-8), Warren (16-8) and Schaumburg (14-6).

"Against Vernon Hills we played the best we have all season," Palatine coach Leslie Schock said. "We looked very sharp and moved the ball well down the field in transition. Our offense looked really clean and we had very few turnovers. All aspects of our game are continuing to improve. We are really clicking well as a team right now. Our offense and defense are both looking tough. I feel like we are really peaking at the right time in our season."

Palatine was riding a five-game winning streak after the Schaumburg win.

One key contributor of late for the Pirates has been Adiranna Filipek.

"She has really emerged as a defensive force for us," Schock said. "She causes key turnovers in games and provides a lot of defensive leadership."

Naperville Central update: Naperville Central was 2-9 through its first 11 games (1-4 in conference). Naperville Central downed Metea-Waubonsie by a 5-3 count.

"It was a quality win considering we were missing 6 regular players (4 starters and 2 key subs)," Naperville Central coach Adam Washington noted.

Naperville Central led 5-2 at halftime.

"In the second half, we really slowed the game down because of the lack of depth on the bench (no subs) and tried to keep the ball in the midfield on our attacking side. The only goal we gave up in the second half was one we put in our own net (the team's second own goal of the game). (Metea-Waubonsie) has a couple of speedy players in the midfield I felt we needed to keep the ball away from. I was happy with the win, but felt we could have played better in the second half."

Alex Novak was leading the team in scoring with 8 goals and 2 assists, while Kim Obergfell had 6 goals through the first 11 games.

Washington noted the team let a couple of leads slip away in recent losses. However, he was pleased with a recent performance against Neuqua Valley.

"The girls showed more heart than I've seen them play with all season," the coach said. "We lost the game 14-0, and it's always tough to take positives away from a game like that. Neuqua has a great coach in Lauren Rippy and some fantastic players that will likely play at the next level. I was proud of how the girls didn't back down, didn't hang their heads and fought until the final whistle.

"We all sat down after losing to Glenbard West and talked about the difference between competing and participating. For most of the season, we've been participating in games. While the score didn't show it, we competed against Neuqua. On the bus ride home from the game you would have never thought we lost by such a large margin because every one of the girls knew they gave everything they had. It shows a lot of maturity to realize sometimes your best isn't good enough and realize working hard and losing can still make you feel good."

Sarah Osier continues to play well in goal for Naperville Central. Washington also has been thrilled with the progress of junior Jana Sztuk.

"She continues to improve every game," Washington said. "Jana has only been playing lacrosse for about a year, but has worked very hard to improve her game. She gives 100 percent toward everything she does. On game day you can tell she woke up ready to play lacrosse. I've been around very few athletes in my life who work and care as much as Jana does. Jana's best lacrosse is still ahead of her. If she continues to work on her game this off-season, she'll likely be an all-conference player next year."

Sam Skodi has returned from injury for Naperville Central, while Sarah Schumacher continues to be a key force on both sides of the field.

"Sarah is a shutdown defender and can also finish extremely well," Washington said.

Katie Giovannoni filled in for Osier (illness) in goal in a recent game and notched her first win at the varsity level. Skodi had 3 goals in her return from injury against Nazareth.

"Her last goal may have been one of the most impressive I've seen this year," Washington said. "She scored while parallel to the ground.

Washington awarded the "hard worker hard hat" to Nicole Pinnella for taking an impressive charge against a bigger opponent in a game against Glenbard West.

Libertyville update: The Wildcats were 6-6-1 through their first 13 games. A recent 19-13 win over Glenbrook North ended a three-game losing streak.

Senior midfielder Hope Nishimoto was leading the team with 37 goals and 7 assists, while senior midfielder Meghann Stelzner had 33 goals and 3 assists.

"We had a breakthrough with our transitions," Libertyville coach Dana Brady said. "We have a lot of great ball carriers that move the ball downfield to goal. While this can work, the player tires easily. We are making great connections

and our passes in our transition from defense to offense and are cutting open for passes and seeing the next pass on the field before it opens up."

Katie Piazzini has been a stalwart on defense for the Wildcats.

"Katie has been our top defender all season," Brady said. "However, she has truly shined on our defensive end by shutting down our opponents' top shooters. She has a commanding presence on the field and focuses on holding her ground and position, not allowing the opponent to enter the 8-meter to shoot. She leads by example to the other defenders and is always there to help others whether it is to show them a proper defending stance or to give encouraging words."

Neuqua Valley update: Neuqua Valley was impressive in recent wins over Metea-Waubonsie (18-1) and Naperville Central (14-0).

Rachel Leibovitz had 7 goals and an assist in the win against Metea-Waubonsie. Ali Gosselin and Caren Lee each had 3 goals. Lee added an assist.

In the Naperville Central triumph, Leibovitz had 4 goals and 2 draw controls, while Gosselin had 3 goals.

Goalie Annie Kidston made 5 saves against Metea-Waubonsie and 7 saves in a shutout performance against Naperville Central.

"Our current strength is passing and spacing in the midfield," Neuqua coach Lauren Rippy said. "Their tiered approach is getting stronger. Our biggest improvement is chasing down the fast break. Some girls are getting good at cutting off but we are still working on everyone being able to ride the ball no matter which way it comes off of the clear."

Kidston has been a standout for Neuqua in goal in recent games.

"With her saves (last week), she has dominated between the pipes and is looking more composed on the clears," Rippy stated.

Stevenson update: The Patriots recorded three recent victories. The team was 9-4 through its first 13 games.

In a 17-15 win over Benet Academy, junior midfielder Rachel Banas had 11 goals. Alyssa Gorenberg stopped 20 of 35 shots in goal.

Stevenson also downed Highland Park (22-8) and Evanston (12-6). Junior Kelsey Patten had 6 goals in the Evanston win. Stevenson also suffered a 9-8 loss to St. Ignatius.

Through the first 13 games, Banas was leading the team in scoring with 45 goals and 22 assists. Patten had 33 goals and 17 assists, while senior attacker Emily Nisson had 28 goals and 7 assists.

Coach Janette Eichfeld has seen her team improve with its ability to transition the ball to the goal quickly.

"We're anticipating the opponent's play and causing more turnovers and intercepting more passes than we had in the first 6 games of the season," she said.

Eichfeld has noticed an uptick on the defensive end thanks to the likes of seniors Hyungi Lim, Taylor Halpert, Katlyn Cook and Jessie Lyman, along with sophomores Emily Loretto and Lily Walker.

"They have significantly improved our defensive part of the game," she said.

"They'e increased the number of turnovers by the opposition two-fold and interceptions three-fold since the season started. Alyssa (Gorenberg) continually improves her save percentage. She's currently stopping 55 percent or more shots in every game now."

Eichfeld noted the team could break the program's single-season record for most goals scored before the end of the regular season.

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