Olive Little scores off penalty kick, lifts Northampton past Southwick Regional High School and keeps their winning streak alive

NORTHAMPTON, MA -- — Junior Olive Little converted a late second-half penalty kick to lift Northampton to a 1-0 win over Southwick Regional High School on Thursday night. Nearing the end of their regular season, the Blue Devils have maintained an undefeated record of 11-0.

The Blue Devils had multiple scoring opportunities throughout the game, but they were unable to find the back of the net. That was until sophomore forward Olivia Busone found the ball at her feet in the penalty box towards the end of the second half. Busone has been a threat on offense this season, and she is currently tied with sophomore Willow Claps for the top spot in scoring. Busone has 19 goals and three assists on the season, and Claps has 19 goals and six assists.

Busone, with her back to the goal and a defender up against her, didn't even get the opportunity to take a shot before she was taken down by a Rams defender. A wave of boos reverberated from the Northampton stands, which quickly turned to cheers once the referee blew his whistle. With an opportunity to take the lead, The Blue Devils huddled together to decide who was going to take the penalty kick.

Although Busone was the one who was fouled, it was Little who walked up to the penalty line to take the kick. Little has also been a top contributor for the Blue Devils this year, with seven goals and seven assists on the season. When the referee blew his whistle to start the play, Little took a brief pause. Everyone in the stands held their breath. Then, she slotted the ball into the bottom right corner of the net, just evading the goalkeeper's hands.

The Blue Devils are now 2-0 against the Rams for the season, an improvement from last season where they were 1-1. Even though they've won twice against them, Head Coach Vanessa Butynski considers them one of their toughest opponents. "They always give us trouble," she said, talking about the Rams, "they always have."

The Northampton fan section, also known as the "Devil's Den," erupted into celebration. Parents were high fiving each other and Northampton students banged on the bleachers in excitement. Little's teammates on the field gave her big hugs, and the players on the sideline cheered and hugged each other too. Butynski clapped her hands and looked more relieved than anything. The tension that had been hanging in the air the entire game had finally been lifted. The Rams did their best to try and come back, but the Blue Devils held them off until the final whistle.

The Rams have also had an excellent season, now 10-2. Their only two losses have been against Northampton, who are undefeated and ranked first in the Central Division. They are coached by Chris Whalley and are ranked second behind Northampton. The Rams had been on a seven-game

winning streak prior to this game, and they have a chance to restart the streak when they play Granby Jr./Sr. High School on Monday at 7 p.m. Unlike tonight's game, they will have the home field advantage when they play the Rams (also Granby's mascot) on their home turf.

The Blue Devils will have the weekend off, and then on Monday they will face off against over-the-bridge rival Amherst-Pelham Regional High School.