The final clash of the season: Northampton battles it out with Longmeadow to a scoreless draw

NORTHAMPTON, MA -- — There were scoring opportunities from both Northampton High School and Longmeadow High School, but neither team was able to find the back of the net. Northampton tied Longmeadow 0-0, marking the Blue Devils' second tie in three games, the third game being a 1-0 loss against West Springfield High School.

Northampton had been on a 13-game winning streak up until their last three contests. The Blue Devils had been dominant in the Central Division; however, the Lancers refused to make the last game of the regular season easy for them. Longmeadow was putting the pressure on Northampton, especially in the second half. Five minutes into the second half, Longmeadow Defender Rhaya Manning drew a yellow card, which prompted an eruption of cheers from the Northampton stands, who chanted, "You can't do that!" That set the tone for the remainder of the game, causing frustration on both ends of the pitch.

Northampton's head coach, Vanessa Butynski, commended her team's defense for their effort and resilience. "They held their own," she said. "At times there was a little bit of fluster, but right away we got reorganized. I thought they did a really good job with that."

In the first half, Northampton had an opportunity to score and take the lead. With 11 minutes remaining, the ball bounced just outside the Longmeadow penalty box, and Senior Midfielder Teagan McDonald was there to connect with it on a one touch shot, which flew just over the crossbar.

Another opportunity for Northampton – Senior Forward Olivia Busone had the ball at her feet right in front of the goal, but the Longmeadow goalkeeper dove forward and stopped the attempt. Busone fell to the ground, but she didn't get a penalty call because it was a clean save.

Longmeadow also had their fair share of chances. The Lancers scored a goal nine minutes into the second half, but it didn't count because the referee blew the whistle for a late handball. They continued to create scoring opportunities but, similar to Northampton, couldn't find any luck.

The Blue Devils had been beating their opponents by seven or eight goals throughout the season, but Longmeadow didn't allow them any leeway to score. Northampton had only a handful of chances, which is unusual to their normal style of play.

"Finishing is going to be a big focus for the next few training sessions," Butinski said.

They were just shy of an undefeated regular season, but the Blue Devils are moving forward and looking ahead to the state championship.

“Our last three games have been the competition we are going to see in the playoffs,” Butinski said. “So we have purposely been playing up to this level to end our regular season.”

Not exactly the storybook ending they were looking for, but the Blue Devils are currently 13-2-1, an impressive record and a vast improvement from last year where they went 9-10. Northampton also has a chance at redemption. Coming up: This Sunday at 5 p.m. Eastern, they face Longmeadow again for the quarterfinal round of the Western Mass. Class A Girls Soccer Tournament.