



Aliso Niguel claims Aliso Cup title in a thriller

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ALISO VIEJO-With the clock dwindling toward the end of regulation in a tied match, Aliso Niguel freshman Sarah Roberts found herself with an open shot and reminded herself to do one thing.

“All I wanted to do was drive down on the ball,” she said.

She accomplished that goal, and the ensuing result helped keep the Aliso Cup on its home campus.

Roberts scored the match-winning goal in the final minute of regulation, as the Aliso Niguel Wolverines rallied to beat the Orange Lutheran Lancers 2-1 in the championship match of the Aliso Cup Tournament

Monday at Aliso Niguel High.

“I hope this will motivate us to play even better,” said Roberts. “It’s fun to play on a team that wins and knows how to play soccer.”

The Wolverines (5-0) outscored their five tournament opponents 16-2 en route to capturing their third Aliso Cup title in the seven year history of the tournament.

“I thought the girls did a fantastic job this week,” said Wolverines coach Randy Dodge. “This is a good group and they can compete with anyone.”

Though the Wolverines were the aggressors early in the half, Orange Lutheran held firm, spurred by the active defensive efforts of juniors Sydney Ferrell and Jenny Gebhardt.

Aliso Niguel had a scoring chance in the 10th minute, but Lancers senior goalie Corey Tobin slapped away a free kick by Roberts for one of her nine saves in the match.

Orange Lutheran (6-1) gradually began to work their possession into the attacking third and turned their only shot of the half into a 1-0 lead in the 22nd minute.

Gathering a ball in the corner of the attacking third, Lancers senior Darian Podmajersky passed to fellow senior Miranda Valdez, who angled back toward the middle of the field against the Wolverine defense and lofted a floating shot that sailed over the left shoulder of Aliso Niguel senior goalie Sammy Prud’homme and into the far corner of net.

But the Wolverines answered in the final minute of the half, as senior Miranda Mills got to a ball in the box and bicycle-kicked a shot past Tobin and into the net.

“Recently in practice I tried a bicycle kick and I completely failed,” said Mills. “When I saw that the ball was behind me, naturally I told myself to try a bicycle kick. When I went for it and saw it go in, I thought it was cool.”

The Wolverines outshot the Lancers 7-2 in the second half, but Orange Lutheran (despite losing defenders Megan Smith and Caitlyn Alario to leg injuries) continued to hold the Wolverines off the scoreboard.

Inside the final minute of regulation, Mills controlled a loose ball in a frenzied scramble of players and sent a pass over to Roberts who booted a shot to the left of Tobin and into the net for the tournament clinching goal.

“I saw a scramble for the ball, Miranda (Mills) passed it back to me, and I just wanted to get a shot on frame,” said Roberts.

Orange Lutheran coach Del Montel acknowledged that while his team played well throughout the tournament, allowing the winning goal in the final minute was a tough ending.

“We gave it our best shot, but you have to play 80 minutes and to lose in the final minute is a bit disheartening,” said Montel. “We have a lot of younger kids that played well and will learn from this.”

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