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STLCC - Meramec Gets Best of Rival East Central In 2-1 Win

In a highly physical game befitting one of the most bitter rivalries of this decade, the STLCC - Meramec men’s soccer team came from behind to beat East Central College 2-1 Friday (Sept. 5) in Union, MO. The Magic, at 5-1, pinned the host Falcons with their first loss of the season at 4-1.

“Considering that we were down 1-0, that, to me, adds a lot to it,” said fourth year coach Brian Smugala. “Battling the elements, the field was in horrible shape. I think our guys adjusted well and as the game wore on we certainly had the better of the play.”

Magic freshman forward Almin Sabotic (Mehlville) booted in the game-winning goal off a penalty kick with just over a minute left in regulation. The PK was awarded after an East Central player was whistled for a hand ball inside the goalie box with Meramec on the attack.

“I just had to finish it with the game on the line,” said Sabotic. “I’ve been used to hitting the PK’s in other games so I was confident going up there - I knew I’d put it away.”

In the first half, East Central started the scoring 17 minutes into play with a bouncing shot in the mud-filled box that slithered by Meramec goalkeeper Chris Eason (Lindbergh.) The Magic struggled to take control of play amidst several illegal hard takedowns. Game officials issued four yellow cards to Falcon players in the first half, and six overall.

With five minutes left in the first half, sophomore captain Ian Porta (Marquette) put Meramec on the board with a run down the sideline, and a little help from teammate Steve Carenza (Marquette) to score and tie the game at 1-1.

“It was a great ball by Carenza, he one-timed it, I think he heard me scream ‘corner’ and he put it down there,” said Porta. “I guess the sweeper thought he had me, he tried to overplay me on the outside and I just tapped it in the middle, walked in on goal and just pushed it by the goalie.”

The play was designed in general by coach Smugala as a formula for success given the playing surface.

“We kept telling our players let’s just get the ball in their end, no matter how we got it in there and then put them under pressure,” said Smugala. “That, basically, was our offense to try to get them to cough the ball up because of the shoddy field conditions.”

The ninth ranked Magic have had the measure of East Central, a conference and Region XVI foe, the last three seasons, having not lost to them since 2005.

“The conference and regional teams, you like to beat them every time and send them a message,” said Porta. “I think with a come-from-behind win, that’s exactly what we did today.”