

Apex stops Green Hope's streak at 74

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By Tim Candon, Sports Editor

In the first meeting on March 10, the Apex girls' lacrosse team held a two-goal lead over Green Hope at halftime but was unable to make the lead stick and lost 9-8.

In the April 17 rematch, the Cougars again led at halftime, this time by a score of 5-2. In the five weeks between the clash of two of the state's girls lacrosse heavyweights, Apex figured out how to hang onto the lead.

The Cougars led the Falcons by as many as six in the second half before handing Green Hope a 9-4 loss.

"Last game, we thought we had a handle on how they were playing, and they came out and were fired up," said Apex's Allison Faulhaber, who had two goals and an assist. "We played, but we weren't playing as well. We figured we had it. This time we played the whole game and that made the difference."

The loss was the Falcons' first defeat at the hands of a North Carolina team since they made their varsity debut in 2004 — a span of 74 in-state matches. Green Hope coach Heather Piper said her team had an off day, but even if they were on, she was unsure if they would've kept up with the Cougars.

"It certainly wasn't our best game or best effort, but I have to give credit to Apex," Piper said. "They played a brilliant game and definitely deserved to win. ... They played so well it would've been hard for us to come back."

In addition to playing a complete 50 minutes, Apex coach Jessica Trombley said her team didn't let the Falcons' seasons-long dominance stand in their way this time.

"We were really excited for the second game, but I think we were going out thinking, 'Let's play our own game' instead of thinking so much about their team and what they had done," Trombley said. "A lot of times [in the past], they were nervous to play them, so I wanted them to act like it was any other game."

But this game started like the first one.

Green Hope surged to a 2-0 lead with 20:16 to play in the first half, but the Cougars responded after the slow start with five unanswered goals before halftime.

Carly O'Connor and Courtney McLaughlin scored a goal apiece to tie the game at 2-2, then Sarah Fellows sandwiched a pair of goals

around a tally by Elizabeth Szep for the 5-2 halftime lead.

During intermission, Trombley reminded her players they were in a similar situation in the first game and they couldn't let up on Green Hope, considering the Falcons tend to get stronger in the second half.

"We couldn't let them come back this game," Trombley said. "We had to go out like it was 0-0 and play as hard as we did the first half."

The Falcons cut their deficit to 5-3 early in the second half, but Faulhaber answered with her two goals, then Szep added another to put the Cougars ahead 8-3.

Less than a minute later, Sasha Vedock added another goal for Apex, and they held onto the lead for the final nine minutes.

Though up comfortably as the game drew to a close, the Falcons peppered Apex goalkeeper Beth Shenberger with shot after shot, only to be turned away. Shenberger stopped eight of the 12 shots she saw in the game.

"They were on a run and she was just coming up with huge saves," Trombley said. "And our defense played phenomenal. They were in their faces all the time."

The four goals scored were the fewest all year for the Falcons, who entered the game having averaged 11 per contest this season and scored no fewer than six goals in any game. Lauren Cosentino had two of Green Hope's goals, and Brittany Ruppert and Kelly Reiser scored the other two.

"The fact they've been the best team for so long, it means so much to beat a better team and prove you're a better team," Shenberger said. "I don't think words can describe how I felt."

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