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In their regular season finale, the Radford University Highlanders took on the Winthrop University Eagles Saturday, Nov. 3. In arguably their most important match of the season thus far, RU was able to pull off a 2-0 victory over the Eagles, and secure a second seed in the Big South Conference Tournament.

Three games in a row, the Highs found themselves scoring the first goal of the match. This time around, they were able to hold the lead for the duration of the entire game.

Sophomore midfielder Steven Hudgens provided the first goal for the team. Hudgens, who had a lot of room around him in the midfield, opted to dribble up and take the shot from 25 yards out.

Hudgens whipped the ball over Eagles goalkeeper Enrique Miranda and inside the near post to earn his first collegiate goal and give the Highs the early advantage in the 36th minute.

Fifteen minutes after halftime, the Highs struck again. Freshman defender Jamie Summers, who was back in the lineup after missing last Tuesday's game against Liberty following a concussion, delivered a long ball down the right side of the field to freshman midfielder Lucas Diniz.

Despite having two defenders right around him, Diniz was able to win the ball just outside of the box and get a shot off. Miranda blocked the shot but could not maintain possession of it.

Diniz followed up his blocked shot with another shot that Miranda could not get a piece of, and won the one-on-three situation, extending their lead to 2-0.

The Highs dominated play on both sides of the ball for the majority of the game. They outshot the Eagles 21 to 4, including 7 to 1 on shots on goal.

RU defending was particularly efficient, winning the ball both in the midfield and back and shutting down the Eagles' two leading scorers in forwards Alex Isern and Achille Ogoubou.

On Winthrop's only chance of the game, the Highs' defense came up clutch. In the 66th minute, a long throw-in to the middle of the penalty area was punched out by senior goalkeeper Ryan Taylor, but was deflected and found Ogoubou.

With Taylor now being out of position to make stop, Ogoubou drilled a low shot on target. However, Summers read the play perfectly and was able to time a slide that stopped Ogoubou's shot and deliver the ball to safety.

Winthrop did not get another shot on goal the rest of the game, as the Highs won the match 2-0.

The shutout was the sixth of the season for Taylor, and moved him to fourth all-time in Highlander goalkeeper history in that category.

The win snapped a three game losing streak and also ended a three game winning streak for Winthrop.

"Before this game we really hadn't come out with energy and our legs were tired," Hudgens said. "But we came out with our seniors tonight - for Ryan and Myles [Jones] - in what was maybe their last game here, and that really pumped us up."

With the victory, the Highs secured a number two seed and home advantage for the quarter finals against Gardner-Webb in the Big South Conference tournament.

"For us to be the second-best team in the league over ten games shows that our program is moving in the right direction," Head Coach Marc Reeves said. "We've got to move on quickly; Gardner-Webb is very talented and they've gotten a lot better since we played them earlier in the year."

The Highs mimicked their performance against Gardner-Webb in the first round of the Big South Conference tournament with a 2-0 win against the Bulldogs on Tuesday, Nov. 6. They repeated the victory like they did earlier in the season, when they beat GW by a score of 6-1 on Sept. 29.

The first goal of the game came from junior midfielder Joe Mayer. He was assisted by freshman forward Jannick Eckenrode. It was a header straight into the net, and was his fourth of the season.

The second goal of the game came at the tail end of the game from Junior forward Chel Ho Kim Park to add to the RU lead, when he clubbed the ball in the net in the 84th minute of the game. The goal came after three previous shot attempts.

Overall, RU outshot GW 14-7 and had more corners with the advantage 6-2.

“The second half of the game we came out with a real fighting spirit,” said Summers. “If we stick together as a unit we can win the tournament.”

The Highs look to continue their sweet success when they take on Winthrop University on Friday, Nov. 9 who defeated Liberty University 2-1 in overtime in the other quarterfinal. In their previous meeting, RU won 2-0. The game is set to be held at 7 p.m.