

No.1 Saints boot City High in opener

Written by Jim Ecker

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Kayla Armstrong is playing soccer at Drake University these days, so the Xavier Saints will have to win their ninth state title in a row without their former superstar.

They welcome the challenge.

Lizzy Bailey, Marisa Berutti and Katie Ives scored two goals apiece Thursday as the Class 2A top-ranked Saints blanked Iowa City High, 6-0, in the season opener at Heco Field.

Armstrong poured in 48 goals in 20 games for Xavier last season when the Saints cruised to another state title, but the scoring mantle has been passed to Bailey, Berutti and Ives this year.

The times have changed for Coach Bailey Winter, assistant coach Rocki Shepard and the entire team, and the 6-0 victory with balanced scoring was a good start.

"I turned to Rocky and I said, 'Last year it probably would have been Armstrong five goals, Marisa Berutti one,'" said Winter. "I like that it was spread out.

"Those three girls that scored two goals each were told at the beginning of the season that they have to score and step up. That's what we were counting on them to do and they did it. We

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were thrilled."

The season was barely eight minutes old when Bailey connected to give Xavier a quick 1-0 lead. Ives made it 2-0 a few minutes later, then Berutti scored a few minutes after that to make it 3-0 with 17:32 left in the first half.

Ives and Bailey struck again to make it 5-0 by halftime, then Berutti collected her second goal to make it 6-0 early in the second half. The Saints backed off from there, substituting freely and giving their six new freshmen a chance to get acclimated to varsity competition.

Xavier counted on Armstrong in clutch situations in big games last year, but it's a new year with new leaders.

"It was nice to have her, but I think we'll do fine without her this year," said Berutti, who has committed to play soccer at Minnesota State. "We'd like to have her in certain situations, but I think we're filling in the spots pretty well.

"It's exciting to try and take control since it's my senior year," she said. "We all try to work together. We have lots to work on, but that wasn't bad for our first game."

Winter thought it was a good way to begin the season.

"We're thrilled. It was great," she said. "It was a nice game to start out."

Ives, Addy Hoffman, Ellie Fischer and Grace McDermott collected assists Thursday. Holly Hazelton made five routine saves in goal for the shutout.