

Martin makes triumphant return for Saints

Written by Tom Fruehling

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The last time Xavier junior Lucy Martin played a soccer game, her dad, Dennis, carried her off the field while her mom, Pam started the family car to drive her to the hospital.

Midway through the second half of the season opener April 3 against Prairie, the starting middle fielder landed wrong on her left foot during a tussle for the ball and tore a ligament in her knee.

It was feared she would be lost for the season to a team that was depending on her defensive skills to defend the Class 2A state title it has won six years in a row.

Martin returned to the lineup for the first time Tuesday in a Class 2A regional semifinal with Marion. And she showed that she's not only back to full speed, but she may be better than ever.

Switched to forward for the night by Coach Doug Graham to give her plenty of action with less risk of injury, she scored three goals in the Saints' abbreviated 10-0 romp over the woefully overmatched Indians at the Xavier field.

She said it's the first time she's been in a scorer's position since she was a little kid in club soccer.

"It just felt great to be playing again," she said. "I was hoping I'd be able to help the team get back to state.

"They've been doing fine without me. And all of my teammates have been so supportive in

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helping me come back.”

Fellow junior Kayla Anderson, who scored four goals of her own Monday in the lopsided victory, said it was good to see Martin at full strength.

“We’re really happy to have her back for the rest of the season,” Anderson said. “All year our whole team has really dedicated themselves to helping each other and pushing each other to get to where we want to be. It’s been a team effort.”

Martin said her injury, though serious, did not require surgery. “It was self-healing,” she said, “with a lot of physical therapy.”

Saints senior all-stater and co-captain Annie Dale, who also had a three-goal hat trick against Marion, said her teammate’s tough rehabilitation regimen fits the team’s outlook this season. Even with six straight state championships, she said, “Our work ethic has been at a whole different level. We’re working harder than ever before.”

A mismatched competition

In Monday’s mismatch, however, they didn’t have to exert themselves much in posting their ninth shutout of the year and the fourth with at least 10 goals.

Their first score came less than a minute into the match, and they scored seven more in the first half. In the first 40 minutes, they took 38 shots and 15 of them were clear shots at the goal. Several sailed over the net, a couple hit the goal posts and a few more were wide of the mark.

The Indians, on the other hand, barely crossed midfield only a handful of times and never came close to getting a scoring chance.

“There’s not much to say,” veteran Marion Coach Becky Herman remarked after the match was halted with 26 minutes to go when Xavier went up by 10 points. “They’re bigger, quicker and

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faster than we are. They're obviously better than we are.

"I told the girls that you can take Independence, Center Point and Waterloo Columbus – three really good teams in our (Wamac) conference – and Xavier is better than all of them combined."

The Indians ended their season 6-10.

Saints advance to regional finals

The Saints, meanwhile, take their 14-2 record and No. 1 ranking in the Class 2A polls into the regional finals at home this Monday at 5 p.m. against Prairie. Monday's winner will advance to the state tournament.

The Saints prevailed 4-0 in their first meeting against Prairie to start the season. "When you get to this point, all the games are different," Graham said. "You're starting over."

Senior co-captain and defensive specialist Mary Levett said her team is determined but not overconfident. "It's been a long season, and we've worked very, very hard. We want to finish strong and show that our hard work pays off," she said.