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REV girls settle in a bit too late

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NORTH HOLLYWOOD - It took the Redlands East Valley girls soccer team 40 minutes to become comfortable in their CIF-SS Division 2 semifinal playoff game with North Hollywood Harvard-Westlake. But by that time, the No. 1-seeded Wolverines had basically sealed up a berth in the CIF finals.

Harvard-Westlake jumped on a tentative REV team early and often Tuesday, scoring three first-half goals en route to a 4-0 victory over the visiting Wildcats.

The victory propelled Harvard-Westlake (20-1-3) into the Division 2 finals for the second straight year and ended Redlands East Valley's winning streak at 17 games. During that winning streak, the Wildcats (26-5) had been smothering on defense, allowing just two goals. But the Wolverines surpassed that by the 34th minute, taking advantage of a REV team that seemed in awe of its opponent and the moment.

"We had three team defensive breakdowns and they scored goals on them," REV coach Katie Husband said. "We didn't seem right out there - we seemed intimidated by the opponent, this high school, everything. We were watching the ball and they made us pay for it."

Senior forward Briana Campos agreed with her coach's assessment, sensing an intimidation vibe when arriving on the Harvard-Westlake campus.

"It was a combination of everything," Campos said. "They've been ranked No. 1 all year and those of us who play club knew a lot about their players and how good they were. So we were intimidated at first."

Not that the Wildcats didn't have good reason to be concerned about Harvard-Westlake. The Wolverines were relentless offensively, with forward Katie Speidel leading the way.

Speidel factored in all four of Harvard-Westlake's goals, scoring the first and last and assisting on the two in the middle. She got the Wolverines going in the 20th minute, touching the ball around a REV defender in the penalty box before beating Wildcats goalkeeper Arami Walker in a one-on-one situation. She scored again in the 49th minute, beating the REV defense downfield to a long ball before scoring on another one-on-one.

Speidel fed fellow forward Danielle Duhl on the second Harvard-Westlake goal in the 28th minute and directed a free kick from Leah Merkle to Nicole Goren for a goal in the 34th minute.

"We felt that we had a speed advantage with our forwards against their defenders and we tried our best to play to that," Harvard-Westlake

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coach Richard Simms said. "It worked pretty well, but I was impressed with (REV). Even when they were down 4-0 they didn't give up."

The Wildcats kept active in the second half despite their large deficit, peppering shots at the Harvard-Westlake goal. REV outshot the Wolverines 10-4 in the second half and looked to have a goal in the 62nd minute, when Wolverines keeper Reba Magier lost control of the ball off a shot, with the ball bouncing off REV midfielder Shereen Khoobbagha's head into the goal.

The goal was waived off though, as the official ruled that Magier had the ball secured before Khoobbagha made contact with it.

"I really thought it was a goal, but the referee felt differently," Husband said. "We were aggressive in the second half and took it to them, but we just gave up too much in the first half."

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