

Daly keeps Carroll alive in PIAA playoffs

PHILADELPHIA – It was a disappointing first impression followed by an opportunistic second chance Wednesday that carried Archbishop Carroll to the second round of the PIAA Class 2A field hockey tournament.

The Patriots were badly outplayed in the first half, but they scored early and late in the second half and earned a 3-2 decision over Merion Mercy in a state tournament opening-round game at Benjamin L. Johnston Memorial Stadium Wednesday afternoon.

District 12 champion Carroll's Alex Almonte got the first goal of the game in the second minute of the second half before Emily Hauck scored twice to give Merion, the District 1 runner-up, the lead with 16 minutes to play.

About five minutes after the second Merion tally, sophomore Carleigh Connors chipped in the tying goal for Carroll (18-4).

Merion Mercy, which had a 14-2 advantage in penalty corners, did not yield a corner until 2:05 was left in the second half. A second Carroll corner found Maeve Riehman getting the ball to the stick of Catholic League MVP Keri Daly, who set off a huge celebration with her goal 53.4 seconds before the half ended.

"That's usually our second go-to on corners," said Daly, a Saint Joseph's commit. "Usually we just hit it straight out and drive it back. Maeve took a dribble, I was open and I hit it into the back of the cage."

Daly and her teammates were happy to see the first half, in which Merion had five penalty corners and four long hits, come to an end with the teams scoreless.

"We all just said at halftime that this couldn't be our last game," Daly said. "We had watched the tape of our championship game (a Catholic League title win over Cardinal O'Hara) and were ready to play.

"When they told us we weren't going to be able to play because of the weather (Tuesday) it was a little disappointing because everyone was so psyched up about playing in states. It just took us longer to get started than we wanted to today."

Merion's defenders, led by Maggie McGovern, Victoria Arra, Alex Lavelle, Hauck, Olivia Knott, and Cate Voegele, frustrated the Carroll passing attack at midfield and kept the Patriots from putting a shot on goal in the opening half.

Hauck's reverse chip brought the Golden Bears (13-9-1) even three minutes after Carroll opened the scoring, and she put Merion ahead nine minutes later on a penalty corner play.

"Our energy level seemed low at that point," Patriots head coach Christina Elisio said. "We told them they had to get back to playing their game if they wanted to keep playing (in the tournament)."

Connors, a midfielder, also used a reverse chip shot to pull her team back into the game.

"We had been transferring the ball back and forth," she said. "I kept looking at the scoreboard, and I didn't like what I saw. I knew I had to try to do something about that score."

Because she did, Carroll advanced to the quarterfinal round of state play to face District 3 champion Donegal (25-1), the team which knocked the Pats out of states four years ago when they last made it past the first round.

"We know how good they are," Elisio said. "Practice (Thursday) will be getting ready for that next big game."