

Strong 2nd half leads Big Green over Rangers

Written by Bob Weber

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By BOB WEBER

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OTTOVILLE — Friday night, usually reserved for area football games, found two teams squaring off in a non-league boys soccer match.

The New Knoxville Rangers traveled to take on the Big Green on Senior Night at the Ottoville Sports Complex. After a scoreless tie in the first 40 minutes, the Big Green outscored the Rangers 2-1 in the second half to come away with the win.

Seniors Alex Horstman, Lucus Maag, Jordan Kelch and Jochem Gregor Johannes Van Der Sluijs (exchange student from the Netherlands) were honored, along with their parents, before the contest.

The first half saw both teams testing the other's defense as Horstman and Maag for the Big Green fired five shots on-goal for the home squad. The Rangers countered with aggressive play on both ends and had two excellent opportunities on-goal by seniors KV Mooney and Ben Kuck.

The Big Green's defense — led by Kelch and junior Joe Van Oss — kept the Rangers from finding the back of the net throughout the half.

After 40 minutes of play, it was scoreless at the break.

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As good teams and, more importantly, good coaches do at halftime, they make adjustments and sometimes challenge their team's play. Big Green head coach Eric Gerker, who recently notched the 100th win of his career, must have got his team's attention during the 10-minute halftime as the home squad took the field very determined to not send out the seniors on a losing note.

It was the Rangers, however, that drew first blood on the evening as Kuck found himself open in front of the Big Green goal and sent a shot into the left side of the net, giving the visitors a 1-0 lead.

As the old rule states - if you don't succeed the first time, try, try again. Nothing could have been truer for the Big Green's Horstman as he delivered shot after shot at the Rangers' senior goalie Dean Frankenberg.

At the 25:01 mark, Horstman finally beat Frankenberg and got his team on the scoreboard, tying the game at 1-1.

Maag was not going to let his fellow senior score the only goal on Senior Night.

At the 23:03 mark, the Big Green sent a forwarding pass downfield towards the Rangers goal and it became apparent that it would be a foot race between Frankenberg and Maag. With the goal exposed, Maag got to the ball first and chipped a shot rolling towards the goal to give the Big Green their second goal on the evening and their first lead on the night, 2-1.

That lead was preserved over the final 20-plus minutes, giving the Big Green and their seniors a win on senior night.

The Big Green outshot the Rangers 9-3.

Ottoville (11-3-1) will take on Kalida Monday night in a rescheduled Putnam County League

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match at home starting at 7 p.m.

New Knoxville (4-10-2) will start tournament play at Lima Stadium Tuesday night (7:30 p.m.) against Lima Temple Christian.

Goals - New Knoxville - (Ben) Kuck, Ottoville - Horstman, Maag

Saves - New Knoxville - Frankenberg (7), Ottoville - Markward (2)