

Three Hamlets Teams Top of Maple After Big Weekend Wins

After a weekend in which Hamlets youth teams won 7, tied 4, and lost 2 games and the adults won one and tied one, three of the Hamlets 5 undefeated youth teams--the Under 11 Boys, the Under 13A Girls, and the Under 15 Girls-- all moved up to the top of their leagues with splendid wins away from home in Plymouth and Bristol counties. Two other youth teams--the Under 11A Girls and the Under 18 Girls-- remained unbeaten and vying for first place, and the Over 35 Men moved to the top of their league with two wins in two games.

Mike Elster's Under 11 Boys played Tidal Wave in torrential rains in Rehoboth and won comfortably on two goals by Tyler Martin. The first was an early solo run on a breakaway and slot, and the second was from a good through-pass from Justin Rothermich. The win was so comfortable that the Hamlets keeper had no shots to save in the whole game. The score was held low by the waterlogged pitch and by a Tidal Wave team packed into the penalty area. With three victories and three shutouts the Hamlets were uncontested at the top of the league. The same is true of the Under 13A Girls who beat Delta F.C. in Plymouth 1-0 in heavy rain on a Stephanie Seagrave near-post volley from a corner by Briana Poulin. Mary-Claire Pelletier was the pick of the forwards, and the MVP for the second game in a row was goalie Samantha Whittier who made two superb saves--a clutch save at the far right post upper 90, and a smothering full-body dive in a one-on-one breakaway.

Also playing away at Plymouth the Under 15 Girls continued their unbeaten streak with Coach Marc Bowden in a 1-0 victory over Crusaders. The win should have been a bigger score for the Hamlets in a game they dominated, but the winner was delayed until 8 minutes from the end. Erin Kinback won the ball in midfield and made a defense-splitting pass to Caitlin Boucher who scored the game-winner for the second week in a row. Top of the League after a Sunday victory, the same team played their State Cup game on Monday night under the lights at Bowden Fields, Central Turnpike, Sutton. Their opponents were the Boston Renegades of the MPS League coached by former Hamlets (and Cornell University) star Ellen Daly who won eight Massachusetts state championships with coach Martyn Bowden. But on this night she was outcoached by Hamlets (and Holy Cross) coach and former Hamlets (and University of Michigan) All-American Deb Flaherty who won 10 Massachusetts state championships with Coach Martyn Bowden. The hero of this game was Maura Fox who scored on the five-minute mark with an 18-yard blast high into roof of the net. Ten minutes later Caitlin Lachowski drove a 30-yard free-kick just under the cross-bar to give the Hamlets a half-time lead 2-0. Sarah Soderberg scrambled a third goal after a goal-mouth melee, and Maura Fox completed the rout, intercepting a pass just outside the penalty area, rounding a defender, and slotting the advancing keeper into the bottom left corner of the net. Full-time Hamlets 4-0. Hannah Moriarty in central midfield came back to her form of the fall season and Kristina Miklavic reminded the crowd how much the team missed her in the fall. As in previous games Demi McLaren made yet another great one-on-one breakaway save that is becoming her trademark.

Gail Bagley's Under 11A Girls traveled west to the Berkshires to play Berkshire United and came away with a 1-1 tie on a goal from Danielle Deschene that kept the unbeaten Hamlets in touch with the league leaders. The Under 18 Girls at Bowden A Field could not have dreamed of an easier game. Boston Blast arrived with 8 players--a situation quite common in the school vacation week, particularly for clubs hit by high-school trips to Europe. The Hamlets

scored freely on the unfortunate visitors, and, after sealing the victory, played the second half eight-on-eight: an honorable course of action by the Hamlets coaching staff. The Hamlets ran out 7-0 winners on goals by Erin Bazinet (2), Elyse Hanley (2), Kate O'Brien, Stephanie De Make, and Liz Welch. These goals may help at the season's end when goal difference and total goals count a lot in determining rank.

The Hamlets Under 17 Boys suffered from a handicap similar to that of Boston Blast with 4 critical starters missing on a trip to Europe and a depleted bench. The problem got worse when the Hamlets were reduced to 10 men ten minutes into the game when a red card was issued after a shirt-pulling incident in the penalty area. Against the skilled and powerful Warriors team from the Stoughton area, this spelled disaster and the 10 men went down 9-0. The skilled Greg Dustin and Rob Magner strove valiantly for the losers.

In the other games at Bowden Fields goals were at a premium and absent in the game that looked to be, on paper, the Match of the Day between two of the top four Under 12 Girls teams in the state: the Hamlets and Tri-Valley. As it happened the Hamlets played with such heart and commitment that Tri-Valley rarely got the ball out of their half in a game which the Hamlets dominated 70% : 30% in possession and territory, and could easily have run out 5-0 winners. But more by good luck than good management Tri-Valley held on in the face of a seemingly endless bombardment from all angles. It didn't seem possible -but the ball just would not go into the net. It is hard to fault most of the Hamlets players-they exhibited a tremendous will to win, but with 11 besieged bodies packed into a penalty area and fighting desperately and courageously there are just too many legs and bodies blocking the paths to goal. The Tri-Valley goalkeeper must have handled the ball 50 times and made 20 saves; the Hamlets goalie made no saves and handled two balls that rolled into the penalty area. With twenty-twenty hindsight it just might have been worthwhile playing the ball back to the big kickers who might have lofted the ball over tire top of the massed bodies in the penalty area and under the bar. This would have happened also if the referee had the confidence and know-how to call the many fouls both inside and outside the Tri-Valley penalty area but this referee had major difficulty calling goal kicks and throw-ins.

The best shot of the match was Samantha O'Keefe's header from Rachel Gillies' comer. It shaved the upright early in the game; had it gone in the final score could have been 6-0. (Interestingly, the best shot by Tri-Valley came from a player trained in the Hamlets Wanderers). But as the clock wound down the Hamlets got desperate and, as so often with young players, the physical overpowered the mental. Ana Bowden, Colby Ornell, Hannah Owen, LeeAnn Card and Emily Mattson played with exceptional heart and good skill in a frustrating but exciting 0-0 tie.

The Under 12 Boys game was equally exciting. In the fall the Hamlets lost the same fixture 3-0 against the Devils United team from the New Hampshire border area (Dracut). They felt they could have done much better, so this was their chance to prove it. After a few anxious moments as they settled down, the Hamlets back four began to protect goalie Mark Hill who made two good saves in the first 10 minutes. Captain and sweeper Michael Hoyer's speed and tackling anchored the defense, and Brandon Esteves' long clearances and runs on the right gave striker Derek Robertson some good chances to get in behind the Devils' back four. Robbie Hayes's spirited tackling and timely interceptions protected the Hamlets' left flank. The ball-handling of Connor King and Major Dorfman in the midfield was impressive and prevented the

Devils from controlling the zone as they had done in the fall. In addition Dorfman's probing runs deep into the Devils' defense ensured that the back four dared not leave their defensive third.

The hero of the game was Derek Robertson who controlled a long clearance from Esteves near the center circle after 15 minutes, and embarked on a 50-yard run, shaking off two defenders, and slotting the goalkeeper beautifully. In the second half Robertson scored once again on a slot after a good run by Dorfman. This fired up the Devils who put heavy pressure on the Hamlets who moved into an 8-man defense Mark Hill made 5 fine saves and showed a safe pair of hands in catching several crosses, and captain Hoye on two occasions overhauled the Devils' fast-breaking forwards. The Hamlets' defense finally succumbed, allowing the Devils a late consolation goal, but the final whistle came seconds later and the Hamlets had a famous victory against a very good team that, on paper, was more talented than them. Full-time: Hamlets 2-1.

There was a similar situation on the Olympic-sized Bowden A Field where the Western Massachusetts Junior Pioneers Under 12B Girls faced the newly-promoted Hamlets Under 12B Girls. From the first the powerful Pioneers had the Hamlets on the back foot and had a territorial and possession advantage (55% : 45%) throughout the game. There were many goalmouth scrambles and desperate clearances at the Hamlets' end, and goalie Arianna Diamantis saved the Hamlets time and again, and, with some help from the Gods on a few occasions, kept a clean sheet (0-0 tie) earning the team a valuable point. Hayley Degnan and Nicole Smith were sterling in defense, drawing on their solid technique in tackling and kicking developed in their Wanderers years. The same can be said of the tough, hard-tackling Jess Drane, thankfully returning from a bad injury in the fall season. The bustling Catherine Bresnihan was the pick of the forwards and she was well-supported by Gina Vasseur-Melle who made several purposeful runs. But, in all truth, the Hamlets did very well to take a point from a strong opponent. Playing away at Middleton on the North Shore the Under 13B Girls faced an Aztecs A team that belongs in a higher division. The Hamlets, in torrential rain and with a biased referee, were not at their best and lost 4-0. By contrast the Hamlets Girls Under 14s traveled to Plymouth County to play Crusaders who beat them in the fall. The story for the Hamlets was the back four of Heather Dziembowski, Olivia Marchi, Courtney Wood and Brittany Rotatori (filling in for the absent right fullback) who were splendid in defense of MVP goalkeeper Erin Ronan who had an outstanding game. Coming away from Plymouth and the Crusaders with a tie is a great achievement.

The game that caused the most excitement on the sidelines at Bowden Fields was the clash between the Hamlets Under 11B Girls and the South Shore Select Under 11B Girls. Both teams were mainly composed of the Under 10s who will be at the heart of the Under 11A Girls teams next year. From the first the Hamlets girls played with reckless abandon and heart. Katelyn Soucey made powerful runs on the wing and, for the first time, consistently stepped into the ball to make long clearances, and Jorgi Adeed dominated the midfield.

The defensive star was Kelsey Campbell, the sweeper, who broke up the rare South Shore attacks and distributed the ball to the Hamlets' fast wingers. One of these clearances produced one of the best goals seen at the Bowden Fields in 2006 and maybe for 2 or 3 years. Nicole Wilson ran for 40 yards on the right wing outpacing several players and then made a superb cross at knee height to Sierra Dubinsky on the near post who swept the cross first time into the middle of the back-netting. The goalie and the defenders were stunned. I can tell Sierra

that goals like this will stay with a striker forever: glorious strike! Minutes later Nicole Scott turned in a cross from Dubinsky and the Hamlets were coasting: 2-0 against a team with a better record. In the second half Kara Breedon scored from six yards out from a cross by Caroline Kelleher, and with five minutes to go in the second half the rout was completed when Megan Talon converted a through-pass by the dynamic Jorgi Adee. Amanda Leveillee made some excellent crossfield passes and Kristin Niland burrowed tenaciously in the goalmouth scrambles and deserved a goal, but the team ran out delightedly with a 4-0 victory preview of next year.

The Hamlets' adult teams are now under way in their leagues. The teams play their home games at 10.00 a.m. Sunday at the Bowden Fields before the 6 or 7 youth games. The Over 35 Men won 2-0 over Oxford and 2-1 against Shrewsbury the previous week. The Women's Over 30 team lost to Boxborough Rebels 2-1 the previous week and tied with Stowe 2-2 this week. Both teams have been playing for years but are always looking for experienced players.

With the Under 13 Boys game postponed, the Hamlets youth and adult teams played 15 games, won 8, tied 5, and lost 2. The victory: defeat percentage for the youth teams in the first three rounds has risen from 44 %, to 60%, to 78%. Congratulations to players and coaches for a splendid weekend of soccer.