

Lady Wolves victorious in return to playoffs

- Rebekah Hufstetler sets a new school record for goals in a season.

 By Tommy Romanach

Sports Writer

TRomanach@RN-T.com

🕒 04.28.17

PREP SOCCER

CLASS 5A PLAYOFFS: Rome girls 7, Arabia Mountain 0

The Rome girls' soccer team played in its first playoff game in two years on Thursday, but it did not take long for the team to adjust.

With a reliable player leading the way and a dominant defense backing her up, the Lady Wolves took a 7-0 win over Arabia Mountain at Barron Stadium to begin the Class 5A state playoffs.

Rebekah Hufstetler recorded a hat trick and Rome found its rhythm midway through the match to post the fourth time this season Rome has won by at least seven goals.

"I think after we got those first few goals, things began to open up for us," Rome coach Jessica Hewitt said. "Things changed once we started moving the ball quickly off our feet. It got the offense moving."

In addition to Hufstetler's three goals, Gigi Gonsalves added two goals and Allie Gaither had a goal and an assist. Shea Kelly also had a goal and an assist, while Kat Tracy did her job in goal with four saves and the shutout.

And with her first goal of the night, Hufstetler put her name in Rome's record books, breaking the program's single-season record for goals scored in a season with 44 and counting. With injuries affecting

Rome (11-9) early in the season, Hufstetler stepped into a new role as someone who could take command and keep the Lady Wolves' offense productive.

"This just means so much to my team. We've really been working hard all season despite some injuries," Hufstetler said. "In the past I have relied more on assisting, so being able to step up into this role and having teammates support me has been really nice."

Gaither scored a quick goal early in the game to go up 1-0, but Rome settled into its playoff setting for the first 20 minutes.

Arabia Mountain kept six defenders back for most of the night, affecting the Lady Wolves' early attacks.

The Lady Rams (15-4) eventually began to fall apart, however, and Kelly scored a goal on a rebound to put Rome up 2-0 with 13 minutes left in the half. A goal from Hufstetler put the Lady Wolves up 3-0 before the half.

"At the break, I just told them we needed to swing the ball quickly with so many defenders in the box," Hewitt said. "Just play it out wide and move it back to the middle."

And as the Lady Rams wore down, the Lady Wolves continued to expose their opponents. Two breakaway goals from Hufstetler and Gaither put the home team at its final total. For the second round, Rome will travel to play Veterans High School in Warner Robins or host Fayette County. Veterans won Region 1-5A and won its final 13 games of the season, while Fayette County finished fourth in Region 3-5A.



Tommy Romanach/RN-T

Rome forward Rebekah Hufstetler scores a goal during the Lady Wolves' 7-0 win against Arabia Mountain in the first round of the state playoffs on Thursday.