



## Athens fall to Warrior Run in D4 semi-finals

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By Brian Fees (Sports Editor)

HEPBURNVILLE— When you are taking on one of the top teams in the district the hope is usually to keep the game close early and try and win it the second half.

It's what the Athens Wildcats did in their first round District 4, Class AA soccer game against Lewisburg, getting a second-half goal to win 1-0.

However, two early goals by Warrior Run in the semifinals on Monday put the Wildcats behind the eight ball and they were never able to recover as Warrior Run won 4-0.

"It was kind of disappointing first half," Athens coach Duane Hafer said.

Hafer knows his team is capable of coming from behind, but he didn't feel they played the same immediately after falling behind on Monday.

"Our play let down a little after those couple of goals," he said. "They have got to realize we can come back. We have done it before. We were down twice this season to Sayre and Mansfield and were able to come back."

Athens came out strong in the first few minutes, but Warrior Run got on the board first as Rachel Grow scored with 29:02 left in the half as she headed a corner kick.

Just 2:18 later Warrior Run scored again when Olivia George found the back of the net.

With 7:45 left in the half George scored for the second time to make it a 3-0 game at the half.

On the first goal Athens goalie Morgan Westbrook went for the ball, but Grow knocked it into the net. A couple times in the first half Athens thought Warrior Run got close to Westbrook in net.

"This is going to sound like sour grapes, but our goalkeeper got handled quite a bit back there in the first half," Hafer said.

Warrior Run controlled play for much of the game and Hafer thought they beat his team on the 50/50 balls.

"They controlled the 50/50 balls very well," Hafer said. "It was very physical play and we aren't used to it. It was physical play, but it was clean physical play. I have to give a lot of credit to them on how they went for the 50/50 balls. They were very physical."



In the second half the Wildcats tightened things up defensively, allowing one goal as Laura Bastian scored on a penalty kick 1:16 into the half.

"The second half I was very pleased with how we played," Hafer said.

"They called a trip in the box and it was a legit call."

Warrior Run had 19 shots and 14 corners in the game and Athens had eight shots and two corner kicks.

Westbrook finished with 13 saves for the Wildcats and Madi Welliver had eight saves for Warrior Run.

Athens had 13 seniors on the roster this year and for Hafer it's hard to say goodbye to the group.

"I think it will be tough," he said.