Rivalry match a rout for Foothill water polo team

Breaming with confidence in the pool Wednesday afternoon, Foothill College center Jamie Breen scored half of her six goals in the third quarter during a 13-4 rout of College of San Mateo in women's water polo at Los Altos Hills.

"I wasn't expecting to put all those goals away, but I think it was just the adrenaline," said Breen, a Woodside High graduate. "They are kind of a rivalry for us, and we were anticipating this game to be a little bit closer and I was ready to put away some balls."

It was close at halftime, with No. 7 Foothill (11-4, 3-0 Coast Conference) barely ahead 5-3 after CSM sprinter Miya Oto, an All-America swimmer, used her speed to score off a counter with 33 seconds left in the second quarter.

The Bulldogs (10-5, 3-1), who employed an offensive scheme their coach dubbed "ane-mic at best," relied on a zone defense to filter shots for standout goalie Daria Kekuewa, who made nine of her 13 saves in the first half.

"We knew they were going to drop on us and make us shoot from bad angles," Foothill coach Jeff Bissell said.

The strategy was effective in the first quarter, even if Breen scored 91 seconds into the match and Gurpuran Singh (Notre Dame-Belmont), whose nickname is "Guppy," capitalized off a counter with 5:15 left.

"I kept murdering her name and she just said, 'Coach, just call me Guppy,'" Bissell said. "At first it didn't feel right, but not it just flows off my tongue."

The two goals were matched by CSM's Jasmine Zaldivar, and the score was even after eight minutes.

The Owls looked to break it open with a three-goal burst during a 76-second span of the second quarter that started with a Breen conversion of a 6-on-5 advantage after the goalie was ejected. But CSM didn't allow another goal in the final 4:09 of the first half to remain within striking distance.

"At that point, we got a little excited because we were taking away what we wanted to take away," said CSM coach Randy Wright, whose team fell victim to eight turnovers in
the second half. "Essentially, it's just a couple of lapses, and you can't have lapses against a solid team like that because they're going to make it hurt."

It didn't help that CSM was held scoreless in the third quarter. Oto was neutralized in the perimeter by the duo of Anna Kim and Hailey Smith, and more often than not the Bulldogs chose to dump the ball into a corner rather than shoot in order to regroup on defense.

"I think just communication was key, figuring out who to send out on offense and who to keep back on defense," said Smith, a Menlo School-Atherton product who notched a hat trick and leads the Owls with 48 goals on the season. "We were a little shaky on that in the beginning, but once we got our nerves out, we started talking to each other."

CSM's lone goal in the second half came with 3:21 left courtesy of Erica Staben (Menlo-Atherton). That put an end to a 7-0 run that began with Breen's hat trick in the third quarter.

"Our girls did a good job of moving around the perimeter," Bissell said. "And the ball was coming into Jaimie from the right place, where it wasn't a 50/50 ball and she had to fight for it."

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