

Cougars, Norsemen & Ref Drama

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Posted: Thursday, January 29, 2009 12:18 pm

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Steele Canyon Coach **Charlie Cleaves** exclaimed "holy cow!" after his team handed **Valhalla** a 2-1 loss in garbage time Wednesday night at Steele Canyon. One Steele Canyon student described the game as the best he's ever seen.

The Cougar student gave credit where credit was due. The final half of Wednesday's game was intense, begging the announcer to calm the situation with an, "Alright, sports fans."

Steele Canyon found itself down a goal at the half, which is when the magnitude of the Grossmont South rivalry set in.

"I don't care what the rules are, sub her out."
- The center ref to Valhalla's head coach.



Devany Savage prepares to get off a shot, but **Brittany Quarles** stands guard with **Danica Ancell** in goal.

"I am really proud of them," Cleaves said. "They had a horrible first half, but I challenged them to come back and win it. The first half just wasn't there. They didn't play how they are expected to play. At the half, I asked them basically to bring it and the results were there. They played a tremendous second half."

Yellow and red cards were flying in the final 40-plus minutes as the ref lost control of the game. Valhalla Coach **Shane Martinez** was upset with the situation. Martinez was already dealing with double-digit injuries. He warned the ref to blow the whistle to avoid even more bang-ups.

The high school ref situation only added to the drama, as the debate over their pay was never figured out. Many can tell the difference between the scabs, who are chosen by the home team.

The center ref basically threw out the rulebook. At one point, he asked a dinged-up Valhalla

player whether she was OK. Apparently looking for sympathy, she replied "no," so the ref told Martinez he needed to sub her out. Martinez, who had never stepped on the field, didn't want to take her off the pitch, and she didn't want to go either. The exchange prompted the ref to say, "I don't care what the rules are, sub her out."

Each team looked for the sympathy vote to get the edge, a.k.a. free kicks. The Cougars got a few thrown in their direction. The Cougars couldn't connect on free kick opportunities but bagged impressive goals instead. The equalizer



was solid and the game-winner was jaw-dropping.

Valhalla junior **Devany Savage (Surf)** put the Norsemen up a goal just 16 minutes in. Cleaves warned his players to make sure Savage was accounted for at all times. She broke away from the pack when she received a pass from **Olivia Harrelson** that Savage rocketed in.

The Norsemen floundered toward the half. The Cougars played with a bit more speed and the Norsemen couldn't control their knock-it-and-go style. The Norsemen typically play a more possession-style game but couldn't get it going with the ball on the Cougars' feet.

Vanessa Bowen and **Whitney Barger (SD United)** were up to the task on defense for Valhalla, involving themselves in through-balls and runs by **Megan McDermand (SD United)** and **Elyse Bobczynski (SD United)**.

Bowen even saved a goal. Keeper **Amy Truesdale** (eight saves) was out of the goal and Bowen stepped in and knocked out a ball that was making its way to the back of the net.

The half ended with Valhalla leading, 1-0, and Cleaves called on his team to get into the game.

McDermand answered the call. She connected on a corner kick from **Paige Neville (SD United)** in the 54th minute. **Sophia Gutierrez (SD United)** kept the game-equalizer in scoring range, which allowed McDermand to knock the ball in.

Captain **Brittany Quarles (SD United)** demonstrated senior fortitude. As just one of six seniors on the team, her experience gave Steele Canyon the go-ahead goal. When the ball found its way to her feet in 82nd minute (injury time), she easily could have let the emotions of the game get to her and sail in a rushed shot. But Quarles settled down the possession, dribbled, found her angle and delivered a beautiful shot that was over the outstretched hands of Valhalla's keeper.

Both teams are ready for the rematch. Martinez hopes his team will be 100 percent. He has players will all sorts of injuries. He is dealing with an ACL, two concussions and five rolled ankles. Additionally, his top-notch sweeper, **Annie Garcia**, is feeling the pain. He and his assistant coach joked they'd have to take the field with eight players. It's no wonder Martinez was concerned about the calls -- or lack there of.