

SAINTS CAN'T HOLD OFF TOP-RANKED HOYAS

Lacrosse Sports St. Stephen's & St. Agnes — 07 April 2012, 12:00 pm

By: **Derrick Perkins**



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The bitterly fought battle between regional lacrosse powerhouses Georgetown Prep and St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School might as well been settled after a second-quarter penalty kill.

Tied at six in the quarter's final minutes, the Little Hoyas' aggressive, bruising defensive play cost them in penalties. With just three defenders guarding the net at the far end of the Saints' field, SSSAS found themselves with a shining opportunity to regain a point advantage just lost.

But the Little Hoyas, ranked No. 1 by the Washington Post, played as if they had a full squad on the field, angrily sparring with the No. 4 Saints and forcing St. Stephen's to regroup again and again until, suddenly, the period ended.

A little more than a minute into the next quarter, Georgetown Prep proved their No. 1 ranking by taking a 7-6 lead.

The goal, just 1:09 into the second half, marked the fourth momentum change of the afternoon — and the last. When the roughly two-hour match ended, the Little Hoyas leapt into the air celebrating an 11-9 win.

"It was really hard fought," said sophomore midfielder Clay Carson. "I think they just outworked us. That lead change [in the third quarter] definitely got our spirits down."

The Saints had rallied from earlier deficits. After the two squads tied in the opening minutes, Georgetown Prep's Chris Hampton gave the Little Hoyas the edge again. But a resurgent St. Stephen's team quickly tied it up before junior Seth Miller caught Georgetown Prep keeper Will Railey well out of the net to give the Saints their first lead of the afternoon.

At the end of the first period, the Saints led 5-2, but it did not last in the face of a relentless Little Hoyas attack. After catching up with St. Stephen's in the second quarter, Prep briefly retook the lead before the Saints evened it at six with 2:29 remaining in the half.

And then came Georgetown's crucial stand — outnumbered, outgunned and indomitable.

"For a good portion of the game we just got outworked," said Saints coach Andrew Taibl. "They were getting a lot of stops and they were able to make the plays. After the first quarter we just got outplayed."

After a quiet first half, Saints senior midfielder Brent Armstrong — selected for the national men's under-19 team last year — desperately fought to keep St. Stephen's in contention, throwing all 168 pounds into the Little Hoyas' defense. It wasn't enough.

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"They were just shutting out a few guys, and we needed to step up," he said. "It's a team game, and we need to come up as a team."

The loss, just their second of the season, puts the team 0-1 in conference action. The league-opening showdown didn't go quite the way Carson had hoped, but any time two Interstate Athletic Conference teams meet it's a bruising affair.

"[We] expect that in the IAC," he said. "All of the games tend to be physical. We all know each other and we're butting heads."

Taibl views the defeat as one of the squad's few opportunities to examine their mistakes and improve. The team's enjoyed a good start, he noted, but the season is still young. The Saints (7-2) face St. Albans on April 12 at home before heading to Flint Hill on April 13.

"You can learn a lot more from a loss than a win. Hopefully we can take quite a bit from it," Taibl said. "I'm trying to remind them it's the start of April. We've got to find a way to learn from it."

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