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Raiders mauled by Panthers

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JACKSON TWP — With the way the Seneca Valley girls lacrosse team had been scoring goals, it didn't look like much could slow it down.

That was before a buzz saw in the guise of Sewickley Academy came to town.

The Panthers limited the Raiders to five goals and recorded the last nine goals of the contest to post a 13-5 victory Thursday.

"Our plan was to maintain the pass and deny cutters," said Sewickley Academy coach Cheryl Ann Lassen. "Offensively, we wanted to make sure we moved a little bit more to make the smart passes, the smart plays."

Casey Ross led the Panthers (4-1 in the section) with four goals, all in the second half, and two assists. Sam Struss led the Raiders with three goals and one assist.

With the Raiders trailing 4-3 at halftime, Struss opened the second half with two goals in a 29-second span to give the Raiders (9-1, 3-1) a 5-4 lead.

Sewickley Academy then took control when Caroline Ross scored the equalizer before Meredith Kendall and Casey Ross netted scores to give the Panthers the first two-goal lead of the game.

"It was more of their transitioning and settling the ball on offense," Seneca Valley coach Dina Hughes said. "They have a great team. They have basic set skills and they work as a team."

When Casey Ross and Lyssa Bantleon scored goals 1:06 apart past SV goalie Lauren Moran, the Raiders were staring at a four-goal deficit with 11:26 to go.

But the Raiders couldn't mount a serious scoring threat the rest of the way as the Panthers' Kathleen Yakulis had a goal, then Casey Ross added a pair before Kendall closed out the scoring with 1:14 to play.

"I was hoping our defensive play would pick up, but they did work hard to the end," said Hughes. "It's something we have to work on."

The Panthers controlled play for the first several minutes of the game, but it was the Raiders who broke through for the first goal when Struss came from behind the net and fired a shot past Sewickley Academy goalie Jul Tehovnik with 15:11 remaining in the first half.

Sewickley Academy countered with goals by Caroline Ross and Yakulis before Seneca Valley's Ally Zezinka tied the game.

The teams exchanged goals when the Panthers' Nicola Limbach and the Raiders' Taylor Mayeda scored. But when Bantleon scored with 53 seconds before the break, the Panthers enjoyed the halftime lead.

"We just didn't work as a team tonight," said Hughes. "We'll learn from it and build from it. I still see a lot of bright things in our future."