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**5A GIRLS SOCCER : MacArthur strikes early in shutout of Marshall**

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Overshadowed by the scoring prowess of teammates Jessie Pettit and Lauren Rickett, MacArthur senior Christina Nunez has strived to prove she's also a goal-scoring threat.

She made her point Saturday, scoring the game-winner just 15 minutes into play, leading the Brahmas -- No.7 in the Express-News Area rankings -- past No. 3 Marshall 4-0 at Farris Stadium in the second round of the playoffs.

"It certainly does help when they double team Rickett and Jessie," said Nunez, who has scored a goal in both of MacArthur's playoff games. "Now, I'm always open."

Nunez's goal sparked a relentless offensive performance by the Brahmas (15-4-2), who scored twice in each half, and missed on at least a half-dozen other scoring chances.

"I think we came out strong and I think that set the tone for us early," MacArthur coach Lisa Mazur said. "We kept working hard. We didn't quit. We kept pushing, kept pushing, and finally the goals went in."

Dianna Combs scored on a 30-yard free kick in the 29th minute, Rickett scored in the 71st and Leah Reznicek completed the scoring in the 74th minute. Pettit assisted on three of the goals.

With their offense in a groove, the Brahmas' backline of Manae Amaro, Alyssa Gallegos and Allie Moran bottled up the Rams, limiting them to just two shots on goal, none in the second half.

Churchill 5, Taft 2: At the Blossom Soccer Stadium, forward Danika Powers scored two goals to lead the Chargers past the Raiders in a second-round contest.

No. 6 Churchill plays Austin Westlake in the third round at 7p.m. Tuesday at New Braunfels Canyon High School.

Taft (15-8) and Churchill were tied 1-1 late in the first half, when Powers scored in the 39th and 52nd minutes to help the Chargers pull away.

"We started a little slow but worked on possessing the ball more," Powers said. "We clicked after halftime and went on from there."

Katie Burden and Stephanie Fareri also scored second-half goals for Churchill, which led 1-0 in the 16th minute on a goal from sophomore Kristin Trowbridge.

**Cristina Mercedes** scored both of Taft's goals.

"We knew we were going to be the heavy underdog," Taft coach Scott Davis said. "But we gave it a pretty good run and it just wasn't there."

Reagan 3, O'Connor 0: At the Northside Complex, the top-ranked Rattlers took

control with a goal in the first three minutes and never looked back in defeating the 10th-ranked Panthers (14-8).

Lauren Evans scored the game-winner for the Rattlers (21-1-1), who are 18-0-1 since losing to Fort Bend Austin on Jan. 13.

"In the playoffs you always want to score first," Reagan coach Frankie Whitlock said. "If you can score early like that it plays in your favor. It did for us."

Reagan extended its lead to 2-0 by halftime on a goal from Christy Lachappelle for. Erica Carson scored the Rattlers' final goal almost halfway through the second half.

O'Connor never established any offensive consistency as Reagan's defense, paced by Kari Mars and goalkeeper Lori Langman, kept the Panthers at bay.

"We're really playing well right now," Whitlock said. "The kids are really pumped. We're starting to peak at the right time.

"Our two captains (Mars, Evans) have done a great job of keeping everyone together. Because of them we're clicking as a group."

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Staff writer Lorne Chan and correspondent Pat Turner contributed to this report.