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Maryland was trailing Princeton 1-0 during the opening minutes of their Wednesday night matchup in College Park when one of the first looks the Terps had on goal was interrupted by a buzzer signaling the end of the first quarter.

Steve Horgan, the national coordinator of officials for the NCAA and the director of umpires for USA Field Hockey, said since games are now being played in 15-minute quarters as opposed to 35-minute halves, he has noticed teams struggle to rebuild momentum after it is cut short.

"In the past, teams would gain momentum during the 15th or 16th minute and [time] was continual," Horgan said. "Now with the break between the quarters, teams have to adjust the way they play."

Despite the team's inability to capitalize on one of the first looks, coach Missy Meharg says Maryland has been preparing for games according to the new structure of the game.

In May, the NCAA passed legislation to modify the rules of field hockey to include four 15-minute quarters instead of two 35-minute halves. The rule change cuts the total game time short by 10 minutes. The adaptation of the rule aligns the NCAA with International Hockey Federation rules, which follow the same rules.

While some may think erasing 10 total minutes from the game clock would diminish the amount of shots a team is able to take, Meharg says the pace of the game is allowing for more.

"I think the four quarters accentuates shots," Meharg said. "Things are happening really fast."

In the first 10 games of the 2019 season, Maryland, the 2018 NCAA runner-ups, have scored 34 goals while allowing only 10. The 2018 season saw more goals in the first handful of games than any other season since 2014. Last year's team also only allowed five more goals than they have thus far this season.

However, the 2019 squad has the best ratio of goals-for and goals-against the program has seen over the last six seasons at 17:5, meaning they are scoring more goals and allowing less when compared to prior seasons.

Meharg said she tries to mirror the quarter rule at practice. The team will play intensely, in both a competitive and physiological sense, for 15 minutes then get a two minute break before they are on to the next drill.

"We're still getting used to the four quarters," Meharg said.

While Maryland is still getting acclimated to the adjustment, Meharg thinks her team has been benefitting from the 120 seconds of rest at the end of every quarter. For the athletes who play the whole 60 minutes, Meharg said their levels of fatigue are much lower, something Horgan said was an intended side effect of the new rule.

“Physiologically, if [players are] running for 35 minutes straight, once they get into the 20th and 25th minute their energy levels dip,” said Horgan. “With a break every 10 or 15 minutes, they have a chance to rest and drink some water to rejuvenate.”

In Maryland’s case, they were able to translate the energy they strategically conserve into goals when it mattered the most. Hannah Bond, a junior defender for the Terps, scored the goal that helped the Terps edge the Tigers 4-3 with seven seconds remaining in the overtime period.

Bond said the Terps practice being in high pressure situations where time creates pressure, so the final play of Wednesday night’s game felt normal to her and her teammates.

“I still feel calm and controlled,” Bond said. “We practiced things like this in training during the week. It’s pretty standard even though it does not seem like that from an outside perspective”

Leading into the 2019 regular season, coach of the defending national champion North Carolina Tar Heels, Karen Shelton predicted a faster pace game that would lead to more intensity, according to an article posted to the university’s athletics page.

The Tar Heels scored 41 goals during the first 10 games of their title-winning campaign. This season having only played nine games so far, they have already surpassed that number, tallying 46 goals.

Over all, Horgan said, the general consensus among coaches and players is that the change has been positive.

“Everybody is adapting to it pretty well. All indications show that the players, coaches and fans like the proces,” Horgan said. “It is making for some exciting hockey.”