

# The Washington Post

## Middletown edges Glenelg, 2-1, for Maryland 2A girls' soccer title

By Andy Marso

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CATONSVILLE, MD. - Glenelg was not supposed to beat Middletown in Saturday's Maryland 2A state soccer championship at UMBC Soccer Stadium. No one was supposed to beat the Knights, whose 17-0 record included a 5-1 win against 4A power Thomas Johnson.

But the Gladiators certainly made a run at it.

Glenelg had the score tied 1-1 until Middletown sophomore Mackenzie Noel slipped in a hard, low shot from 25 yards with eight minutes left for a 2-1 victory.

"I just hate seeing everyone all sad," Glenelg junior Megan Pawtowski said. "I knew that we had the same amount of chances they did, even though we came in as the underdogs. We were so close and I think everyone just left their heart on the field."

Glenelg (13-4-2) nearly scored first when Rachel McCarriher's left-footed rocket glanced off the crossbar in the 25th minute.

Middletown came right back with a breakaway by Mary Pritts. Pritts pushed the ball past Glenelg keeper Brooke Carey, but Carey slowed her enough that Pawtowski and Elizabeth Ebeling were able to track back and get between her and the goal.

The Glenelg defenders were under a consistent barrage of Middletown attacks that often came from within the box in the first half.

"Liz is like my savior," Carey said. "She always tells me she's going to throw herself in front of any ball. Megan and Casey [Vantucci] were marking really tight and not letting them get shots off, so that made my job a lot easier."

The Gladiators could only hold off Middletown's all-state forward duo for so long. Jacky Kessler came into the game with 2 goals and 12 assists and Jenna Caudle came in with 23 goals and 10 assists. The two added to that total in the 46th minute, with Caudle splitting the defense with a pass that found Kessler open on the right side for a goal.

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Glenelg answered in the 56th minute on a hustle goal by senior Gretchen Gurganus.

Gurganus outran Middletown's keeper to an Emily Budman header and chipped it in for her first goal of the season.

"I save it for the big ones," Gurganus said after the game, laughing through tears.

The Gladiators couldn't hold the tie, but their chemistry was obvious after the game. The interview room was a mixture of tears and laughter, as Gurganus, Carey, Pawtowski, Ebeling and Vantucci took turns cracking each other up.

"To judge our season on this last game is wrong," Ebeling said. "Our season was so much more than this."

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