

Girls soccer: Glenelg saves its best for last

Gladiators win 1A state crown on penalty kicks

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Posted 11/20/08

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(Enlarge) Glenelg soccer players Grace Kirshe, Katie Chase and Hope LaHayne, from left, run to hug Catherine Cottrell after winning the Class 1A state championship against Sparrows Point Nov. 14. Glenelg won, 1-0, on penalty kicks. (Staff photo by Sarah Nix)

Coaches have a favorite saying: Defense wins games.

Glenelg's defense, which had given up 24 goals in its first 10 games, not only won a game, but the state Class 1A championship as well.

The Gladiators' defense shut out Sparrows Point in regulation and two overtime periods and went on to win, 1-0, in a penalty kick shootout for their third straight state title, and sixth for the program. But they would not have had that opportunity to win without the exceptional play of keeper Brooke Carey and back Hope LaHayne.

Carey, a freshman in the second shootout of her high school career, saved two penalty kicks and her teammates -- Kristen Schmidbauer, Ellie Axenfeld, Grace Kirshe and Catherine Cottrell -- scored to beat the Pointers, 4-3, in the tie-breaker.

Earlier in the game, LaHayne made a huge goal-line save and later stopped a breakaway to keep Sparrows Point off the scoreboard and eventually force the game into overtime.

Carey said she "felt confident" going into the shootout because her team had practiced penalty kicks many times during the playoffs. It was the last thing the Gladiators had worked on at practice the day before the state final, held Nov. 15, at UMBC Stadium, coach Dean Sheridan said.

"I was against penalty kicks (to determine state champions) and now I'm fortunate to be on this (winning) side. I feel for Sparrows Point," said Sheridan, referring to the rule adopted last year that changed the format for breaking ties. From 1989 to 2006, teams were declared co-champions if they remained deadlocked after 80 minutes of regulation play and two 10-minute golden-goal overtime periods.

Carey had seven saves in the game, but the most impressive save came from LaHayne. With seven minutes left in the first half, Pointer midfielder Sarah Hoar pulled Carey to one side of the cage and drilled the ball to the other side. But LaHayne stepped in to make a dramatic save and rejected Hoar's shot. Hoar thought the ball had crossed the goal line.

"I was so frustrated," Hoar said. "My first shot was two inches over the line. The girl from Glenelg (LaHayne) kicked it out."

LaHayne said she saw Hoar "get away from everyone. I saw Brooke in the front on the far post, and I just hoped (the shot) didn't come to me," said LaHayne.

LaHayne "did a nice job," said Pointers coach Conrad Snyder, whose team lost to Glenelg in the 2007 state final. "We had a chance to crack them. One would have done it."

Glenelg's defense didn't always look so strong, said Sheridan, until he shuffled the lineup. In their last seven games, the Gladiators gave up just one goal. That was in the regional championship game against Harford Tech; that game also went into a shootout.

In an intense, physical championship game, Glenelg controlled the first 10 minutes of each half but the Pointers controlled most of the game beyond that.

"They put us on our heels and forced us to dig deep," said Sheridan. "I honestly think that if we had scored in the first 10 or 12 minutes of the game," the outcome would have been much different.

With Sparrows Point goalie Kelsey Eagan out of position, Rachel McCarriher took the opening shot of the game two minutes into the first half, but it missed the far post. Minutes later, Alex Collier drilled a point-blank shot at Eagan. Katie Chase also got off a shot early in the game. But the Pointers took over from there.

Schmidbauer and Cottrell had opportunities early in the second half, and Axenfeld sent a through ball to Collier, who went one-on-one with Eagan, but, as in the first half, Sparrows Point controlled play for the remainder of the half.

"It was one heck of a state final game," Sparrows Point's Snyder said. "Our girls did everything right."

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