

Saints ousted by North Scott again

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 11 June 2015 19:01 - Last Updated Thursday, 11 June 2015 19:12



DES MOINES - Lizzy Bailey and Sydney Wright helped the Xavier Saints win two state titles and make four trips to the state tournament during their careers for the most successful high school soccer program in state history.

That fact helped ease the pain somewhat after the Saints lost to North Scott, 4-1, in the quarterfinals of the Class 2A state tournament Thursday afternoon at soggy Cownie Park in Des Moines.

Xavier won state titles in 2012 and 2013 when Bailey and Wright were freshmen and sophomores, completing an historic run of eight titles in a row, an unprecedented accomplishment in any girls sport in Iowa. The Saints reached the semifinals last year and made the quarterfinals this year, losing to North Scott both times.

There were a few tears Thursday, but also a sense of great accomplishment.

"I told people when I was a freshman and sophomore, we were spoiled almost with Kayla Armstrong and Annie Dale," said Bailey, referring to two former Xavier stars who played big roles on title teams. "We don't have that much talent now, so the last couple of years we had to work really, really hard."

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"It's been awesome, coming to state all four years and the state championships with all my teammates. It's been a fun time here."

Bailey will continue her soccer career at St. Ambrose.

North Scott, the defending Class 2A champ, dominated Thursday's match. Freshman Elena Minor tied the score for Xavier, 1-1, with a goal with 11:19 left in the first half, but most of the match belonged to the Lancers.

Karly Soy scored twice for North Scott (15-5) to give the Lancers a 2-1 lead at halftime. Karli Rucker made it 3-1 with 25:05 left in the match and Lauren Blake made it 4-1 with 15:41 remaining.

North Scott edged Xavier, 1-0, earlier this season and seemed to know every move the Saints wanted to make.

"I just think we weren't being aggressive enough," said senior Katie Ives, who led the Saints with 16 goals this season. "We knew what they had to offer.

"I think we didn't take advantage of what was put on the table. We definitely could have played harder, me included."

The Saints caught a few bad breaks on the damp grass from sporadic rain showers in Des Moines. They seemed to slip at the wrong times, and a couple of wet soccer balls got loose from Xavier goal keeper Melody Snow at the wrong time.

Nonetheless, North Scott appeared to be the stronger club.

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"We came out a little timid from the start," said Xavier Coach Beth Samek, "but truly give North Scott so much credit."

Samek, in her first year as head coach, graduated from Xavier in 2006 and played soccer for the Saints. Injuries kept her off the field when the Saints won state titles in 2004 and 2006, but she's thoroughly familiar with the school's success over the years.

Samek accepted a big assignment when she took the job.

"Great tradition," she said. "Just being part of that is truly an honor. It's something you want to be part of and see continue."

The Saints finished with a modest 9-8 record, a misleading mark because the 2A Saints played mostly 3A competition all year.

"We made tremendous progress throughout the season," said Samek. "Obviously to finish with a loss leaves a little bit of a bitter taste in our mouth, but you can't take away any of the progress and momentum we had going into the state tournament."

"I'm very proud of our players for what they've accomplished."

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Ives transferred to Xavier as a sophomore after a year at Jefferson. She became a key member of the program the last three years.

"I feel really good about it," said Ives. "Xavier is a really good program. I feel blessed to be able to become a part of this program and being able to be coached by the amazing coaches I've had."

Ives plans to pursue a double-major at the University of Iowa in pre-law and sociology. She plans to play club soccer at Iowa, but not with the UI varsity.