

Cougars reach state tourney, aim higher

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The No. 7 Kennedy boys soccer team was relatively subdued after its 1-0 victory over ninth-ranked Cedar Falls on Saturday at Kingston Stadium, especially considering that the win put Kennedy into the state tournament for the second year in a row.

Perhaps the Cougars (14-5) were subdued because they were recovering from a hard fought game against a conference foe. Or maybe it was because they have bigger goals yet to accomplish this season.

"It is something that we have wanted since the beginning of the season," said junior midfielder Gabe Christianson. "Our (ultimate) goal is to win state so we are that much closer."

The Cougars didn't waste much time celebrating, but instead began to focus on the next step towards obtaining that state championship.

"Now that we have gotten down there, the task is to win that first night," said co-coach Steve Robertson. "We need to win that first night and come back ready to play two more games."



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The Cougars are seeded eighth in the [state tournament](#) . They play top-seeded West Des Moines Valley (20-1) in a first-round state tournament game June 2 at 5 p.m. at Cownie Park in Des Moines. Kennedy was beaten by Valley, 2-1, on April 15 in their only meeting of the season.

Kennedy got to state by beating talented Cedar Falls (13-5) in a hard-fought and physical game, indicative of what was at stake for both teams.

“They came out as hard as we did and we were both battling,” Christianson said. “It got a little bit out of hand as the refs let us play a little bit. In the second half it sort of calmed back down and we played a little more soccer the rest of the way. I felt it was a really good game and we were fortunate to come out on top.”

The physical play was part of the Tigers' strategy to keep the fast, skilled players from Kennedy at bay. Kennedy had beaten Cedar Falls, 4-0, during the regular season.

“It was obvious that they decided to come in and play physically and try to take away some of our skills by playing physical man-to-man defense,” Robertson said. “That always works a little bit but in the end we were able to get that one opportunity and put it away.”

The goal came at last in the 64th minute when Gabe Christianson found his brother Gareth in the box about 10 yards out from goal. Gareth juked a defender and fired a shot into the side netting.

“I saw a defender coming in so I chipped it back and I ended up in a little scrap for the ball with a couple defenders, tackled through a couple of them and I saw my brother coming in back

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side, so I hit it back side,” Gabe Christianson said. “He did some good work, he dribbled a defender and put it in the side net which was sweet.”

Kennedy 1, Cedar Falls 0

Goals -- Kennedy: Garet Christianson. Assists -- Kennedy: Gabe Christianson.