

Schulz has fresher legs now for Cougars

Written by Jim Ecker

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Mark Schulz had to scoot Thursday evening.

He had just helped the Kennedy soccer team blank Dubuque Senior, 4-0, in the semifinals of the Class 3A substate tournament at Kingston Stadium and his high school graduation ceremony at the U.S. Cellular Center was less than an hour away.

But being in a hurry is nothing new for Schulz, a multi-talented athlete who successfully juggled his time with the Kennedy track and soccer teams this spring.

He placed sixth in the 800 meter dash at the Class 4A state meet in Des Moines last Saturday and he's the leading scorer for the 13th-ranked soccer team with 12 goals.

"Now that track's over, I've been sleeping about 24/7. Getting my legs some rest," he said. "I come home from school just about every day and just take a nap until practice."

"It was nice to get a little bit of rest so they can recover a little bit."

Kennedy (9-8) will visit third-ranked Dubuque Hempstead (14-2) in the substate finals Saturday at noon. If the Cougars win, Schulz will be headed back to

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Des Moines for another state meet.

Schulz did not join the Kennedy track team until he was a junior, but has quickly made up for lost time. He was clocked in 1 minute, 55.74 seconds at the state meet in the 800, his fastest time ever, and also had a 1:54 split on a Kennedy relay at state.

He missed some time with the Kennedy track team this spring to play with the soccer club in big matches when there were conflicts.

"I don't think the track coaches were too happy with me," he said, smiling, "but I think they were happy with me after my state performance."

Kennedy soccer coach Steve Robertson said he worked with the Kennedy track coaches to make sure Schulz did not get worn out.

"From the beginning, the biggest thing was making sure that he wasn't getting over-trained," said Robertson. "We were on a constant lookout for that the whole season."

Nonetheless, Robertson said Schulz struggled at the Mississippi Valley Conference track meet when he ran an open 400 about an hour after running an 800 on a relay.

"He just totally ran out of gas," said Robertson. "He was just jogging through the end, almost."

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Robertson said he's taken it easy on Schulz in practice, especially as the seasons unfolded. "Obviously it doesn't do any good to run him into the ground right at the most important time of the year," he said.

Schulz plans to play soccer and run track at Wartburg College, but it won't be as demanding because soccer is a fall sport in college.

Nonetheless, he'll be busy with two sports in college while he also pursues two academic degrees in sports management and finance.

"That will be an interesting double-major and double-sports," he remarked.

Schulz also played football at Kennedy and was a successful place-kicker. He does not plan to play football at Wartburg, but that could change. "If some things don't go as planned, I might switch over to football," he said.

Schulz appears to have untapped potential as a runner, considering he's been a track athlete for only two years. "Let's just say my form needs a lot of work," he said.



Schulz is proud of what he's accomplished in high school as a busy student-athlete.

"I don't want to have any regrets looking back on high school," he said. "I think so far I've completed everything and made a lot of great memories with my school friends and teammates and teachers."

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Sam Hanzelka, Schulz, Nikolas Newcamp and Skylar Showalter scored goals Thursday in the 4-0 victory over Dubuque Senior. Jacob Sarasin collected three assists and Sameeullah Jung had one.

The Cougars grabbed a 4-0 lead at halftime, giving Schulz and other players a chance to rest for Saturday's showdown with Hempstead. Robertson liked the way things turned out.

"It was good for us, because obviously there were a ton of distractions today for our team," he said. "They're all running off for graduation tonight and the families are all in town."

"We knew the biggest thing today was going to be the mental side, making sure we maintained the focus and didn't start thinking about all the other things that are going on. And so that was good."

Kennedy lost to Hempstead, 2-1, during the regular season in a tight match.

"We have to play our best game of the season," said Robertson, looking forward to Saturday. "They're a very good team, very strong. I think it will be a really exciting game, a tough game."