

Warriors learn lesson; headed to state

Written by Mike Condon

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J.P. Graham and his Cedar Rapids Washington boys soccer team remembered what cost them in an earlier loss this season to Cedar Falls.

"We gave the a couple of goals on dead ball situations," Graham said of his team's 3-2 loss to the Tigers during the regular season. "We worked on it for two weeks and it showed today. We were a lot more comfortable out there today."

The Warrior defense stood tall and the offense came through with a pair of late first-half goals to post a 2-0 win in the Class 3A Substate 3 final at Kingston Stadium.

No. 4-ranked Washington (14-4) will playtop-seeded Iowa City West (17-1) in the state quarterfinals Thursday at 5 p.m. in Des Moines. No. 8 Cedar Falls closes its season at 13-6.

Saturday's game was delayed over an hour by lightning and then it was played in a cold, steady rain.

"That didn't bother us much," said junior Jacob Bjornson. "We have played in bad weather almost all season. We were anxious and ready to do, but the coaches kept telling us to sit down and rest our legs."

Cedar Falls applied some early pressure, playing with a brisk wind at its back. Warriors' keeper Gunnar Lenzen made two key early saves to keep the Tigers off the board.

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"We knew they would come out strong like that," Graham said. "That's the kind of team they are. We worked a lot at winning those balls in the box."

Washington grabbed control of the game when Jack Sundermann gained control of the ball in the center of the field and launched a perfect pass to senior Boris Licono-Moreno, who rocketed a shot that Cedar Falls keeper Aaron lehl got his hands on. But his deflection went just inside the upper corner of the goal with 8:10 left in the half, giving the Warriors a 1-0 lead.

"I was excited to get the goal," Licono-Moreno said. "I was in the right place at the right time and I took the pass and just shot it at the right moment."

The momentum continued on for the Warriors. Senior Kimu Kasha picked off a Cedar Falls pass and fired it past lehl with 4:41 in the half, upping the lead to 2-0.

"That goal was big for us," Bjornson said. "It took a lot of the pressure off us for the second half. We wanted to get a third one, but also didn't want to make any mistakes to let them back in the game."

With a 2-0 lead heading into the second half, Washington played a conservative game, not letting Cedar Falls loose for any good looks against Lenzen.

"They stepped it up today," Graham said. "We got goals from two seniors and played well as a team. This is their third trip to state in four years. Our goal wasn't just to get to state, we want to do some things when we get there."

Licono-Moreno is excited for the younger players on the roster.

"This will be a great experience for all our freshmen," he said. "It has been a great season and the freshmen should really enjoy the time at state."

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