

Saints clip No. 1 seed Heelan in OT

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES - Jeremy Jacoby was the most relieved member of the Xavier soccer team at the Class 2A state tournament Thursday afternoon at Cownie Park in Des Moines.

Jacoby accidentally scored a goal for Sioux City Heelan to help the Crusaders stay in the match, so he was breathing a lot easier after the Saints trimmed Heelan, 3-2, in overtime on a goal by Jerry Duball.

Jacoby tried to clear the ball from the Xavier goal mouth in the second half with a header, but he inadvertently steered the ball into his own goal to let Heelan tie the game, 1-1.

"It was terrible, but it happens," said Jacoby. "But we got the win and can breathe another day."

Xavier (10-9) will face Norwalk (13-6) in the semifinals Friday at 2:30 p.m. on Field 9.

Duball scored two goals for the Saints, including the game-winner with just 2 minutes, 15 seconds elapsed in overtime. Duball has been a stalwart for Xavier all season, but the Saints got a big lift from sophomore Connor Vogl, who spent most of the season with the frosh-soph team.

Vogl replaced injured Mason Hoxie on the roster and wore Hoxie's No. 9 jersey, but that was Vogl who collected two assists in the state tournament, one on a perfect header to Duball and the other on a pass to Joshua Hoffmann for a 2-1 lead in the second half.

Connor stepped up today and played like he's played with us all season long," said Xavier Coach Amir Hadzic. "He is obviously a very gifted player."

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Xavier was seeded eighth and last for the Class 2A state tournament and Heelan was seeded No.1, but that's based on season records and not reality. The Saints played a rigorous schedule against mostly 3A competition in the Mississippi Valley Conference, accounting for its modest 9-9 record heading into the tournament.

Heelan arrived with a 12-3 mark, but the Saints dominated the first half and were clearly the better club.

"If you look at records, they would be the No. 1 seed," said Duball, "but if you look at who we played and our team, we would definitely be No. 1."

The Saints also have tradition on their side, with six state titles since 2004.

Hoffmann scored on the pass from Vogl to give Xavier a 2-1 lead, but Heelan tied the game 2-2 with 6:26 left on a goal by Joe Kipp. Suddenly, the game was up for grabs despite the Saints having dominated the action.

"It's very scary, because soccer is a really cruel game that way," said Hadzic. "If you miss those opportunities, they don't come very often. Usually punishment comes just around the corner."

The Saints survived and advanced.

"I think we are deep enough to go all the way," said Hadzic.