

Ives boots Saints into 2A semifinals

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 12 June 2014 20:10 - Last Updated Thursday, 12 June 2014 21:40

DES MOINES - Katie Ives did not grow up as a member of girls soccer dynasty at Xavier High School, but she certainly knew about the Saints and their amazing success as a young player in the Jefferson district.



Ives transferred from Jefferson to Xavier last year and did her part Thursday to keep the Saints in contention for an unprecedented ninth state title in a row.

Ives lofted in a free kick from about 40 yards away with 28 minutes, 51 seconds left in the second half to help Xavier blank Ankeny Centennial, 1-0, in the opening round of the Class 2A state tournament on a windy day at the Cownie Soccer Park.

Xavier (11-7) will face North Scott (17-4) in the semifinals Friday at 2:30 p.m. on Field 6.

Ives, a junior, joined the Saints for their eighth title last year and wanted to become a part of their soccer dynasty.

"I grew up watching Jefferson soccer, but I definitely knew about the legacy and I knew about all of the great players that were at Xavier," she said. "I aspired to be just like them."

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Xavier senior Marisa Berutti was fouled by a Centennial player while battling for a loose ball near the Saints bench, giving the Saints a free kick. Xavier Coach Bailey Winter immediately told Ives to take the shot.

"That's kind of her shot. We were thrilled to see it drop in," said Winter. "That was pretty. Very pretty."

Ives was happy to oblige.



"I like to practice those shots a lot because I guess I have the leg for it," she said. "It definitely takes a lot of practice. We spend a lot of time on it."

There was a stiff breeze at Cownie Park Thursday and Winter elected to have her team play into the wind in the first half. That meant the Saints had the breeze at their back in the second half and it paid dividends on the clutch goal.

Ives lofted the ball over Ankeny Centennial goal keeper Savana Johnson and just under the cross bar for the only point of the game. It was a perfectly placed shot from a good distance away.

"As soon as I saw the wind take it to the back of the net it was a great feeling," said Ives, who collected her seventh goal of the season. "The wind definitely helped me on that one."

The Saints are making their 12th straight appearance in the state tournament, extending their own record. They won their first state title in 2004, fell short in 2005 and began their incredible streak of eight titles in a row in 2006.

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Winter, then known as Bailey Dorrington, helped start the streak as a player.

"That seems like such a long time ago. A very long time ago. It's crazy," said Winter, who became the head coach last year.

"It blows my mind. It's exciting that the program has done so well and the tradition is still there. It's just great to be a part of it."

The Saints graduated a big senior class last year, including the incomparable Kayla Armstrong, and this year's relatively young team (just four seniors) is trying its best to keep the streak alive.

"I do feel like we have a lot more pressure this year because of the amount of amazing players that we lost last year," said Ives. "But we always have to put that into perspective and take that on our shoulders."