

Saints ousted by Norwalk in shootout

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES -- Logan Buschette scored a goal for Cedar Rapids Xavier in the Class 2A state soccer tournament Thursday afternoon during the PK shootout, but the Saints lost to Norwalk and his injury-plagued career came to a disappointing end in Des Moines.

Buschette picked up his crutches and went home.

Buschette tore the meniscus in his left knee in a substate match against DeWitt Central on May 23 and needs surgery, but he missed the 2010 state tournament with a torn ACL and wasn't about to skip another one.

He played sparingly during Thursday's game, wearing a heavy brace on his knee, but Xavier Coach Amir Hadzic selected him to shoot first in the PK shootout after the teams battled to a 1-1 draw after 100 minutes of soccer.

Buschette made his goal to give the Saints a 1-0 lead in the shootout, but Norwalk won the shootout 5-4 and captured the match on a chilly, rainy, gloomy day at the Cownie Soccer Park.

"It's not fun," said Buschette, a senior. "This is my last game ever, so not fun at all."

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Hadzic rubbed ointment onto Buschette's left knee before the game and the midfielder decided to give it a try.

"He toughed it up," Hadzic said. "He warmed up a little and said, 'I want to go.' He steps up and knocks down the first one (in the shootout). So that tells you a little bit about Logan."

Buschette and the Saints beat Norwalk, 1-0, in the Class 2A state championship game last year for their second title in a row. Buschette was one of the heroes in that game, scoring the only goal on a penalty kick.

The Saints were hoping for a three-peat this year, but needed to get past Norwalk again - this time in the quarterfinals - to keep their hopes alive.

"This wasn't our best season, but we were there with everybody," said Buschette after the Saints finished 8-9-1 for the campaign. "We're better than most of the teams here. We just got an unlucky opponent today."

Norwalk (14-5) controlled the first half and had numerous scoring chances, but Xavier goalkeeper Jordan Hoffman knocked most of them away and the score was tied 1-1 at the half. Sam Steenhoek scored with 2:33 left in the first half for Norwalk, but Colin Gunn quickly countered for the Saints with 1:07 left in

the stanza and they were deadlocked after 40 minutes.

Nobody scored during the second half and nobody scored in either overtime, so after 100 minutes it went to the PK Shootout.

Buschette, Tom Bales and Chad Gilmer scored three straight goals in the shootout for the Saints, but Austin Pierangeli, Nick Bobst and Josh Lundy countered for Norwalk and it was tied 3-3 with two shots left for both teams. Then came the turning point.

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Josh Steffensmeier fired for Xavier, but Norwalk goalkeeper Spencer Hoyt got both hands on the ball and knocked it away. That gave the Warriors the opening they needed.

Steenhoek scored to give Norwalk a 4-3 lead. Eli Smith tallied for the Saints to make it 4-4, but Norwalk got the final shot and won the marathon contest when Kevin Meinecke got the ball past Hoffman for the game-winner.

"Disappointed," said Hoffman, "but we had a good year."

Hadzic thought the match was worthy of the finals, rather than the quarterfinals, but Norwalk was seeded No.3 and the Saints were seeded No.6 and they met right away this year.

"I think that both teams are well-matched," he said. "It's too bad we meet in the first round."

Norwalk will face Spirit Lake Park in the semifinals on Friday. Dubuque

Wahlert and ADM will meet in the other semifinal.

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