

Wash, Kennedy advance on shootout wins

Written by Tom Fruehling

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On a miserable night of marathon boys soccer at Kingston Stadium Wednesday, highly ranked Washington and Kennedy both survived scares from lesser foes to make into Saturday substate finals.

Each Class 3A semifinal game was tied 1-1 after two overtimes and decided in shootouts.

In the contest that started in drizzle at 5 p.m., fourth-ranked Washington escaped a scrappy Waterloo West bunch 5-4 on penalty kicks.

And in the nightcap that ended at 10:15 in a misty fog, fifth-ranked Kennedy squeaked by a young Dubuque Hempstead crew 4-2 in the shootout.

The Warriors (13-4) face Cedar Falls at 10 a.m. Saturday at Kingston in one substate final, while the Cougars (14-3) go up against Linn-Mar at noon in the other one.

Prior to the match against the Wahawks (8-10), Washington Coach J.P. Graham exhorted his troops to "score early and often."

They did neither, but did manage to score exactly when they needed to in the end.

Waterloo struck first at the 25 minute mark in the first half on a clean shot by Chris Cleope.

"They seemed to start with more energy than we did," Graham said.

After falling behind, however, Graham said he felt his team picked up the tempo.

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“We started putting pressure on them and kept it.”

The Warriors finally found the goal with 15 minutes gone in the second half on a strike by senior team leader Austin Bergstrom.

“We were playing kind of lackadaisical at the start,” Bergstrom said. “When they scored it put some fire in us, and in the second half we kept knocking on the door the whole time.”

Despite its dominance, the Warriors were shut out the rest of the game by a spunky Wahawk defense.

In the shootout, though, Washington opened with goals by Evan Fisher, Mike Eken, Kimu Kasha and Jake Bjornsen.

Sophomore goalkeep Gunnar Lenzen, meanwhile, made a crucial stop on a line drive by West’s Jon Schmadeke on the Wahawks’ fifth kick.

“Penalty shootouts are fun to play,” Lenzen explained coolly.

With the scored knotted at 4-4, Bergstrom faked right and smacked it in left for the game winner.

“Gunnar,” Bergstrom said, “took the pressure off of me with his great save.”

Coach Graham was relieved his team scraped by but said he was confident going into the tiebreaker.

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"I felt the keepers were about even but that our shooters were better," he explained. "And we were. One better."

The second match was almost a mirror image of the opener.

Hempstead (6-12) has a lineup made up mostly of freshmen and sophomores and began the season 2-10. But the Mustangs had rebounded to win four of the last five.

Kennedy controlled the first half but was unable to score until Zachary Russell found paydirt with 3:17 left.

"The ball dropped in front of me in the box, and I just turned and shot," he said. "It was pure instinct."

That tied the score a 1-1 since Dubuque connected four minutes earlier on the only time it came near the net in the first half.

As Cougar goalie Nathan Althoff fell down, a dribbler off the foot of Mustang Bobby McCaw skittered by him.

After a lackluster second half played in wet and slippery conditions, it all came down to the shootout.

Althoff made two tough stops to start out.

Kennedy got winners from Mitch Bobbin, James Ruzicka and Brandon Skaggs to take a 3-2

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lead. Cougar Killian Magee then put the game away with a soft shot that had the goalie going in the opposite direction.

“I look at the eyes of the keeper the whole time I’m up there,” Magee explained. “I never look at the ball. It’s a funny way of doing it, but it seems to work pretty well.”