

CE • STAR TRIBUNE • WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2018

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SPORTS

SOCCER STATE TOURNAMENTS

CLASS 2A GIRLS SEMIFINALS



Wayzata's Eva Bruer, left, and Stillwater's Abby Begin dove to the pitch in the second overtime of a Class 2A girls' soccer semifinal. The No. 2-seeded Trojans later won a shootout.

# 'Tonka, Wayzata to meet for crown

Both the Skippers and Trojans advanced to the title match by winning a shootout.

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Score on Ms. Soccer: Stop Ms. Soccer. Score on Ms. Soccer.

For Minnetonka, the shootout against defending champion Egan and star goalkeeper Megan Plascenko on Tuesday at U.S. Bank Stadium could not have come better.

The Skippers won the shootout 4-3 to advance to the Class 2A girls' soccer championship game at 3 p.m. Friday. The team played to a scoreless tie through regulation and a 20-minute overtime.

No. 5 seed Minnetonka (10-4-1) opened the shootout with Hilary Knackin scoring on

Plascenko. Then Plascenko, who also scored four goals this season, took Zagan's first attempt and was stymied.

When Minnetonka's Lisa Miranasi scored next, she gave the Skippers a 2-0 lead and a psychological edge.

"As soon as I saved the first one and it was (Plascenko's), I knew she was going to be someone that off her game," Minnetonka goalie Paige Kuhlmeier said. "Shootouts can really get in your head."

Sophomore Olivia Muehlberg felt the pressure build but didn't falter in round seven. "I just walked up and thought, 'I got this,'" said Muehlberg, who previously recorded one shot and zero goals this season.

Muehlberg walked into the situation fresh. Plascenko, brilliant all season for previously unseeded and No. 1 Egan (7-5-3), felt the weight.

"As the game goes on and it's the fifth,

sixth, seventh shooter, and you know that if you don't make a save, that could be it — that's when it really starts to get to you," Plascenko said.

Muehlberg's goal and a subsequent Egan miss clinched the upset.

**Wayzata's Stillwater 190** Once Wayzata coach Troy Pesmecker selects his varsity girls' soccer team this season, he begins sharing a select group to handle penalty shots.

The Trojans' special teamers justified the season-long search. They bested Stillwater 7-6 in an overtime shootout to win the game and advance to face Minnetonka in the Class 2A championship game at 3 p.m. Friday.

No. 1 seed Wayzata (17-0) went second in the shootout and converted four consecutive times in rounds five through eight to avoid elimination. Then goalkeeper Madison Le stopped Stillwater in the sixth round and teammate Elizabeth Page followed with the

clinching goal.

"When I saw Elizabeth ready to line to kick, I knew she's a really consistent kicker so I felt pretty good," Le said.

Page and the Trojans saw the first semifinal at U.S. Bank Stadium go to a shootout and needed for a similar outcome.

"We didn't want to try to get to it, but since we were so prepared, once we got there, we all knew we just needed to do what we could to pull out the win," Page said.

Using statistics that a baseball fan could appreciate, Pesmecker charts players on 50 penalty kicks taken to practice throughout the season. He identifies the steadiest performers and allows them to set the lineup order.

Both regulation goals came on penalty kicks. Wayzata senior Megan Malecha made it 1-0 late in the first half and senior Abby Begin of No. 3 seed Stillwater (15-2-0) tied the score in the second half.

CLASS 1A GIRLS SEMIFINALS

## Defending champion Mahtomedi to play Orono again in title match

Once Orono scores a goal, opponents should be especially cautious for at least the next couple minutes, because another goal is likely to get pumped in.

Scoring goals in pairs has driven Orono's success in the girls' soccer state tournament. And the Spartans scored twice within a two-minute span in the second half for a 2-1 victory over Bellefleur-St. Marguerite Tuesday in the Class 1A semifinal at U.S. Bank Stadium.

"During the halftime talk, we talked about just playing hard for the first four minutes," said senior Sarah Mitchell, who scored the team's first goal.

Orono coach Erin Murray said she has seen her team score in quick succession all season.

The Spartans scored twice within a minute in their state quarterfinal victory over Duluth Marshall.

"They knew that the other team's on their heels a little bit," Murray said.

The Spartans (19-2-1) scored in the 43rd minute before senior Sarah Johnston, a Ms. Soccer finalist, gave them the lead in minute 37, 37 seconds later.

The Red Knights (14-6-2) took a 1-0 lead in the 46th minute on a goal by senior midfielder and Ms. Soccer finalist Amanda Casady.

"Except for about a couple minutes, I thought we did a fantastic job of shutting them down," Red Knights coach Scott Helling-Christy said.

The victory extended Orono's 14-game winning streak and sets up a rematch of last year's title game with defending champion and top-seeded Mahtomedi at 10 a.m. Friday. The Zephyrs won 2-1 a year ago.

The Spartans, who won the state title in

2014, will play in the state championship game for the fourth time in the past five years.

HEATHER RULE

**Mahtomedi 2, Holy Angels 1** Both Class 2A girls' soccer semifinals Tuesday went past the 100-minute mark, delaying Game 3 and leaving Mahtomedi players sapped by hunger.

So the top-seeded Zephyrs (14-5-1) took a bite out of Holy Angels. They scored early, led by two goals at halftime and forced the defensive-minded Stars to play catch up.

No. 4 Holy Angels coach David Wald said, "We're not really built to be a come-from-behind team." Mahtomedi prevailed.

A 15-yard blast from Lauren Hainich in the third minute "got us excited and ready to play the rest of the half," said Sonia Meyer, who assisted on the goal.

"That was huge, at least for me, emotionally," Mahtomedi coach David Wald said. "And I think we took it at them for about the next 30 minutes."

Holy Angels coach David Marchak estimated his team's slow start at 20-25 minutes but what's concerning? What matters is that Hainich scored again in the 27th minute to put the Stars (17-3-1) in a bind.

"We're not really built to be a come-from-behind team," Marchak said. "All season long we've prided ourselves on being tough to score on."

Mahtomedi's pace held sway. The Zephyrs finished with 17 shots, well above anything Stars' goalkeeper Crista Forsyth faced all season.

Trojanmate Gia Aleman scored a goal but it wasn't enough.

DAVID LA VAGUE

CLASS 1A BOYS SEMIFINALS

## Unseeded Bemidji to face top-seeded Blake in final

Aiden Helwig had two goals and Silas Hess scored his 20th of the season as unseeded Bemidji defeated No. 3 seed Holy Angels 3-1 on Tuesday to advance to the Class 1A boys' soccer championship game.

Hess broke a 0-0 deadlock with a goal in the 44th minute in the semifinals at U.S. Bank Stadium.

"It really tightened it up a little bit for us," Hess said. "We don't relax and just realize that we were in this game, and we were here to win it."

Hess also broke up a Stars threat off a corner kick near the lumberjacks goal in the 60th minute.

Holy Angels (19-1-1) and Bemidji (19-2-1) played a defensive battle in the first half, and both teams made their share of defensive stops near their respective goals throughout. The lumberjacks broke through twice to get shots on goal in the first half, but Stars sophomore goalkeeper Peter French stopped both.

Bemidji struck again in the 50th minute as Helwig, a midfielder, kicked a loose ball past French, a 2-0 lead.

"I saw the keeper bobbing (the ball), so I just ran in there and tapped it," Helwig said.

It marked the first time Holy Angels had allowed two goals this season.

Holy Angels applied pressure afterward and it paid when senior defender Chase O'Rourke scored on a header in the 60th minute. The Stars, who had no shots on goal in the first half, took more control of the play in the second half, when they had six shots on goal.

But Helwig gave the lumberjacks a two-goal lead again at 3-1 with his second goal in the 73rd minute.

MATTHEW DAVIS



RICHARD POWERS/STARTRIBUNE: Holy Angels' Porter Ball, left, of Holy Angels and Ben Hess of Bemidji fought for the ball in a Class 1A boys' soccer semifinal. The unseeded lumberjacks won 3-1 over the second-seeded Stars.

Blake 3, Austin 1: Goals from three players for the Bears was not a surprising stat, considering every player on Blake's roster has scored a goal this season.

"That's not the only strength of the Bears, however."

"One of the strengths of our team that gets overlooked is our defense, because we score a lot of goals," Blake coach Tamba Johnson said. "Defensively, we don't really give up a lot of good, clean chances."

Blake (18-3-2), the No. 1 seed, led 2-0 at halftime on goals from senior Luke Melin and junior WEI Mortenson. Senior Jake Lundberg drove down and passed the ball to Mortenson, who found it opening.

"Jake did all the work on that one," said Mortenson, whose second goal of the tournament

came with 7 minutes, 7 seconds left before halftime.

The Pickers (16-5-0), the No. 4 seed, made it 2-2 about three minutes into the second half on a goal from sophomore Henry Tolbert.

But Blake sophomore Keegan Jones got the two-goal lead back with a penalty kick in the 54th minute.

"Once we were down by two that second time, we knew that we needed to get some more goals up top," Austin coach Iain Lovison said. "We couldn't quite get that next one to fall."

In their fifth state tournament appearance, the Bears will try for their first state title since they won in 2008.

HEATHER RULE

**SCHEDULE**

**STATE TOURNAMENT**

**SOCCER - BOYS**

**AT U.S. BANK STADIUM**

**CLASS 1A**

**Finals** - 10 a.m. Friday

**Championship** - 10 a.m. Saturday

**CLASS 2A**

**Finals** - 3 p.m. Friday

**Championship** - 3 p.m. Saturday

**SOCCER - GIRLS**

**AT U.S. BANK STADIUM**

**CLASS 1A**

**Finals** - 10 a.m. Friday

**Championship** - 10 a.m. Saturday

**CLASS 2A**

**Finals** - 3 p.m. Friday

**Championship** - 3 p.m. Saturday