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Wednesday, 06 June 2012 15:39

Victory over Hartford, Falls' upset of Arrowhead give Grafton home match

The soccer gods smiled on the Grafton High School girls' team last Saturday.

Not only did the Lady Hawks stun Hartford, 2-1, in a WIAA Division 1 regional title game to advance to the sectional level, they secured home-field advantage in the process.

Grafton's next challenge in the quest for a return trip to the state tournament comes Thursday, June 7, when it hosts Menomonee Falls at 7 p.m. Falls reached the sectional semifinals by upsetting Arrowhead, 1-0, in overtime Saturday.

Because the Hawks are a higher-seeded team, they get home field for the next round.

"We're still playing, and that's the good thing," said Grafton coach Don Arnold, whose squad used a second-half rally to edge favored Hartford in a game played at Arrowhead.

"Both teams fought hard. We were able to get a couple of goals in the second half and made it stand up."

After the teams battled through a scoreless first period, Grafton took the lead for good in the 44th minute.

Alyssa Arnold launched a high corner kick into the box that Tess Safstrom headed past the Hartford keeper.

The 1-0 lead stood until the 73rd minute, when the Hawks got an insurance goal from Hannah

Knauer. The senior caught Hartford defenders flatfooted when she dribbled past them on a 60-yard run and drove a shot over the keeper and into the net.

“That was a great goal. They were pressing us, and Hannah used her speed to beat them back,” coach Arnold said.

Hartford, champion of the Wisconsin Little Ten Conference, made things interesting with a quick counter score. At 74 minutes, Marlyse Weber found the net off a corner kick by Maria Stephans.

But the Orioles were unable to do any more damage after Grafton’s defense regained its focus.

“I think we might have been in celebration mode on that last one,” coach Arnold said. “We gave up a goal, but we were able to regroup after that.”

Arnold singled out the defensive play of Gabi Kuester against Stephans, Hartford’s top offensive player.

“I think we’re playing some of our best soccer of the season,” he said. “We’ve got a chance to keep doing some good things in the tournament.”

The win improved the sixth-seeded Hawks’ season record to 17-6-2. Hartford (No. 3) finished the year 16-3-3.

Menomonee Falls (No. 7) pulled off an even bigger upset with its shutout win over Arrowhead (No. 2). Falls improved to 17-5-2.

The winner of the Grafton-Falls game will advance to a sectional title match against the winner of Thursday’s semifinal game between Cedarburg (No. 1) and Homestead (No. 8).

The sectional final will be played at 7 p.m. Saturday, June 9, at Germantown.

Grafton 4, Sussex Hamilton 0

A second-half scoring surge put the host Hawks in control of a regional semifinal game May 31.

Grafton took a 1-0 lead into halftime after Haley Orlowski scored with an assist from Alyssa Arnold in the 29th minute.

Hamilton’s upset hopes were dashed when the Hawks added goals by Angie Mann in the 55th minute, Carley Pfannerstill at 72 minutes and Alli Demerath at 73 minutes.

Assisting on the scores were Arnold, Audrey Dickmann and Emma Fatla, respectively.

Big Foot/Williams Bay 8, Port Washington 1

An encouraging start wasn't enough for the Pirates to avoid a season-ending loss in a WIAA Division 2 regional semifinal game May 31.

After host Big Foot/Williams Bay opening the scoring in the 20th minute, Port answered seconds later with a goal by Abby Becker off the kickoff.

However, Big Foot countered with goals at 26 and 30 minutes, took a 3-1 lead into halftime and wasn't threatened the rest of the way.

"We played really well for the first 20 minutes and got a nice goal on a set play," Port coach Mike Bultman said.

"But a few minutes left, we had a lapse and gave up two more goals. After that, I think we were mentally done."

Morgan Sutich had a hat trick to lead the winners, who improved to 17-4-3.

Port finished 3-14-1.

Image Information: GABI KUESTER (right) headed the ball away from a Sussex Hamilton player during Grafton's regional semifinal win May 31.
Photo by Sam Arendt