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Top-seeded Pewaukee snaps Grafton's win string in sectional semifinal battle

After seeing his team steamroll its way to 10 straight wins, Grafton boys' soccer coach Don Arnold had every reason to believe the success would continue in a WIAA Division 2 sectional tournament last week.

Host Pewaukee had other ideas, though, outsloughing the Black Hawks for a 2-1 overtime win in a rain-soaked semifinal match Oct. 18.

The top-seeded Pirates prevailed just one minute into the extra session when Austin Rosenberger scored off a cross from Mike Graf.

The goal ended the Hawks' postseason run and snapped a 10-game streak in which they outscored opponents, 58-2.

"Honestly, it's a shock that we're done," said Arnold, whose team finished the season 15-7-1.

"I thought we were poised and ready to make a long run in the playoffs. I never thought about us losing."

That's not to say Grafton players and coaches were expecting an easy time against Pewaukee (17-2-3). But the Hawks also weren't expecting to have to battle through damp weather that turned much of the field into a soggy mess.

"Both teams had to play on the same field, but our game is very much built on speed," Arnold said. "We had a hard time adjusting to the conditions."

Neither team found the net in the first half, though not for lack of trying. Fourth-seeded Grafton had a shot bounce off the crossbar, and Pewaukee struck a post on one of its attempts.

"Both keepers came up big. It was scoreless, but both teams had their chances," said Arnold, who singled out junior goalie Killian Mielotz for making several key stops.

"Both defenses played very well throughout the game."

Grafton broke through first in the 62nd minute. After Aaron Hodges fired a shot that deflected off the Pewaukee keeper, Adam Huibregste nailed a follow-up that put the Hawks up, 1-0.

The lead didn't last long, though. Three minutes later, the Pirates launched an attack that penetrated the Grafton back line and drew a penalty on a collision in the box.

Alex Zabel converted the penalty kick to knot the score.

With both defenses stiffened through the rest of regulation, the game moved into overtime. The Pirates took the kickoff and wasted no time, with Graf delivering the ball to Rosenberger for a 40-yard shot that found the upper net.

"We were fine going into the overtime. We talked about being aggressive, but Pewaukee came out fast," Arnold said.

"It was a great goal, nothing cheap. I wish it was our guy who scored it."

The loss, the Hawks' first since Sept. 15 at a tournament in Appleton, provided an abrupt end to their season. But it didn't dampen the success of a team that regrouped from a sluggish start put them at 5-6-1.

"If you look back, we weren't a very good team early in the season, but something clicked in the middle of the year," Arnold said.

"The kids started playing like they were capable of. We had a great season and played some fantastic soccer."

Last Saturday, Pewaukee advanced to the state tournament for the first time since 2008 by edging Shorewood in a 4-2 shootout after the teams played to a scoreless tie through overtime.

Image Information: JAKE KELLETT and his Grafton soccer teammates saw their season end with a 2-1 overtime loss to Pewaukee in a WIAA Division 2 sectional semifinal game last week. Photo by Sam Arendt