

Unbeaten Franklin captures TSSAA soccer title

Farragut Admirals fall in finale, drop 2-1 decision in mud melee

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BRENTWOOD, Tenn. — Through the slippery grass and slimy mud, Franklin held its ground yesterday as the most powerful girls high school soccer team in the state.

Once again Knoxville Farragut was the finals victim, 2-1, as the Lady Rebels won their third of three state championships and the first sponsored by the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association.

Franklin, handing the Admirals their first loss in 17 games, finished unbeaten for the fifth year at 18-0 and extended its undefeated career mark to 62-0-1.

"I'm definitely looking for two more (championships)," said sophomore right wing Trish Sisson, who was named the tournament's MVP in her second championship season. "We knew they would be fired up for us. We had to move the ball and work it together.

"The field was a big factor. It was whoever got to the ball first."

Franklin got to the goal first, taking a 2-0 halftime lead with Sisson providing one goal on a headball and assisting on the second one on a pass to Stacy Burchett.

But Farragut, seeing its dream drowning in the puddles on Brentwood High's fields, stormed back on a Rhonda Hebert goal with 8:18 left and was preparing for a dangerous corner kick when time expired.

"I was worried. I had confidence, but I was still worried," said Franklin coach Gary Shrader, winning the title for his alma mater in his first season out of college.

Prep soccer

"I knew that with a two-goal lead they could catch up quickly. Then they got that goal and I knew they could tie it at any time. The momentum would be going their way, then."

With just over two minutes remaining, Admiral forward-halfback Tracy Foels booted the ball toward the goal with a strong shot that nearly tied the game. All-tournament keeper Margaret Gurley was in the right spot and pounced on the ball.

"They gave me a good game," said Gurley, who saved three shots on goal out of 12 opportunities by Farragut including one between her knees.

The junior goalie also appeared to have stopped the only goal allowed when she dove on another strong kick by Foels. But the ball slipped through and Hebert slid into the goal head-first, hitting the loose ball into the net.

"I didn't think I'd be able to do it," Gurley said. "I haven't had that much of a workout all season."

With only 30 seconds left and Farragut still threatening, Gurley helped take some time off the clock to preserve the win by dragging out her goal kick downfield.

"We had our chances," said Farragut coach Nancy Leach. "I just wish we had played the whole game with the enthusiasm we did the last 10 minutes."

Leach said the Admiral chances were lessened by major mistakes, including three offsides calls on breakaways and three violations on in-

bound throws for lifting the foot. Left wing Shauna Christiansen, although held scoreless, also hurt the team with her speed despite the soggy field, the coach said.

"The little mistakes we made added up to a lot," said Foels, a junior. "I don't have the answer as to why we got off to such a slow start. We didn't show any emotion until mid-

way of the second half."

Although Farragut could match Franklin's midfield prowess, the Rebels still got 18 shots with nine of them saved by Admiral goalies Sayeedha Khan and Mara Morreale.

Sisson got the winners on the board only 4½ minutes into the game when she was surprised by the ball coming toward her near the

goal. She leaped into the air and headed the high pass by center half-back Leigh Workman for a 1-0 lead.

"I didn't expect it at all," Sisson said. "I just tried to get to it."

About seven minutes before the half was over, Burchett scored on a cross from Sisson — her specialty.

"It feels a lot different this time," said sweeper Tracy Woodside, who

was sidelined with injury last season but made some key defensive plays yesterday.

"Everything we've done is terrific. I think there was more pressure than there was last year."

Added Shrader, who was thrown in the mud by his players after the win, "We did what we had to, just like it's been all year." ■