

Northwest Boys Get Their First District Soccer Title With 2-1 Win Over Eureka

By Jeremy Rutherford
Of The Post-Dispatch
11/06/2000

Matt Andersen worked the length of the field before taking a shot from about 25 yards away. As the blast ricocheted off the crossbar and back onto the field, Northwest High soccer coach Azim Anwary stooped in pain.

Andersen was shooting to give Northwest the go-ahead goal with 3 minutes 35 seconds remaining in a 1-1 game against Eureka for the Class 4A District 7 crown.

"I told (Northwest assistant coach) Ron (Wilhelm), 'Just keep giving the ball to Matt ... it's a matter of time,'" Anwary said.

Regulation time expired with the score still knotted at 1-1. But in the first 10-minute overtime, given the opportunity, Andersen took advantage and netted the winner on a similar but lower-angled shot.

Northwest captured its first district championship in the 16-year history of the program, rallying from the No. 5 seed to win the tournament 2-1 over No. 2 seed Eureka.

"I'm so happy, I can't even talk," said Anwary, who announced at the start of the season that this would be his final year. "It's a thrill. The boys played with their hearts and guts. What they didn't have in skills, they made up with emotion."

The reward for Northwest (16-8-1) is a sectional game Tuesday night against McCluer North (14-10-3). The game is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. at the Anheuser-Busch Conference and Sports Centre.

The Lions have never played in a sectional soccer game, and perhaps they might not have had Andersen not felt a demand to redeem himself. He was calm, but carrying a smile, after the game.

"I didn't know what to do after that," Andersen said, referring to his shot that hit the crossbar. "That was as close as I came to crying all year. I knew that I had to make up for it. This is the best moment of my life."

Eureka, which defeated Seckman 2-0 in the semifinals to advance to the title game, nearly ended Northwest's season in the opening minute of overtime. But a header from a Wildcats' player hit the top of the crossbar and bounced out of bounds.

"That was like, 'Oh, my God,'" Anwary said. "Not another season almost there. You know, because we've been there a few times and we never get over the mountain. We wanted to climb this mountain - the district - and we did it."

Andersen's goal, his 26th of the season, capped an amazing tournament for Northwest. The Lions beat Fox 3-1 in a first-round district game and then ousted top-seed Summit 2-1 in the semifinals. They are now 13-1 in their last 14 games.

Sectional soccer

Northwest (16-8-1) vs. McCluer North (14-10-3)

Day: Tuesday

Time: 7 p.m.

Place: Soccer Park
