

Northwest Heads Into Uncharted Waters

By Jeremy Rutherford
Of The Post-Dispatch
11/09/2000

As the final seconds ticked away, two bus loads of students from Northwest High pushed onto the field at the Anheuser-Busch Conference and Sports Centre to celebrate something truly remarkable.

The Northwest soccer team continued its improbable playoff surge Tuesday with a 1-0 victory over McCluer North in a Missouri Class 4A sectional game, qualifying the Lions for the school's first-ever quarterfinal game.

Northwest (17-8-1) is one of eight teams remaining in the Class 4A playoffs. It will face Francis Howell North (24-6-1) at 7 p.m. Saturday at the A-B Conference and Sports Centre.

The Lions began the season 1-7 and, despite righting that ship, drew the No. 5 seed at their district tournament. But they overcame that obstacle, too, and now possess a mark of 16-1-1 over their past 18 games.

"This team doesn't know that it's not supposed to be here," Northwest co-head coach Ron Wilhelm said. "This team every day keeps saying, 'One more, coach ... one more, coach.' I'm not going to tell them not one more."

On Tuesday, Northwest got the goal it needed from David Brown. Brown, the area's No. 3 leader in assists, scored his 11th goal of the season with 13 minutes 32 seconds remaining.

"The ball was bouncing, it was open, and I shot," Brown said. "I looked up, the keeper (dived) and it went right past him in the corner. It was the greatest feeling in the world."

Northwest's Matt Andersen enjoyed that experience last week with his 26th goal of the season that defeated Eureka 2-1 in OT in the district title game.

The bundled-up Northwest crowd erupted when Brown converted his goal for a 1-0 lead. The celebration continued among the fans, but the players quickly calmed down as 13 minutes remained in the game.

"Oh, that was (a long time)," Brown said. "They kept playing kick and run, and we just kept clearing it. They couldn't get anywhere doing that. I was just thankful they couldn't get any chances."

The wait for a quarterfinal appearance has been even longer for Northwest's other co-head coach, Azim Anway, who began the Lions' program 16 years ago. "Hey, we did it," Anway said. "This whole team is fired up."
