

SPORTS

SECTION C

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T-L Photo/SETH STASKEY

ST. CLAIRSVILLE'S Zach Oliver kicks the ball toward the net as East Liverpool's Dallas Brewer defends. The Red Devils defeated the Potters in Saturday's OVAC Class 4A championship match at Wheeling Island Stadium in a shootout. Additional images may be found at cu.timesleaderonline.com

St. C. wins 4A OVAC crown in a shootout

By **KIM NORTH**
Times Leader Sports Writer

WHEELING – Ninety minutes wasn't enough to decide Saturday's Ohio Valley Athletic Conference Class 4A boys' soccer tournament championship between top-seeded East Liverpool and No. 2 seed St. Clairsville.

The Potters (9-3-0) and Red Devils (9-1-1) went to penalty kicks to decide the intense contest, with the Belmont Countians prevailing, 2-1, in the shootout on the artificial surface at Wheeling Island Stadium.

Deadlocked at 1 after 80 minutes of regulation time and a pair of 5-minute overtime sessions, St. Clairsville scored on all of four of its penalty kicks, while backup goalkeeper

"I HAD all the confidence in the world in the kids when we went into penalty kicks."

— **Gary Watt**
St. C. Head Coach

Jonathan Bartolo denied the third and fourth kicks he faced to secure the Red Devils first-ever OVAC soccer title.

"I had all the confidence in the world in the kids when we went into the penalty kicks," St. Clairsville head coach Gary Watt allowed. "We practice penalty kicks every day, so our kids – top to bottom – know what to do. We're confident that we can put every one of them in the net."

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St. Clairsville senior Zach Oliver blasted the ball into the right side of the net for the first penalty-kick goal, but the Potters' Klayton Kosek, who didn't play a minute of regulation or OT, also found the net.

Junior Lucas Heidelberg put the Red Devils back ahead in the second round when his laser along the rug scooted underneath a diving EL goalkeeper Zack Adkins. Once again, the Potters responded as Alex Potts' shot trickled off of a diving Bartolo's fingers and into the cage.

In the third round, Jacob Hawthorne, a Red Devils' junior, slowly rolled the ball along the turf into the bottom right corner as Adkins' diving effort came up short.

That's when Bartolo stood tall between the pipes. The senior was forced into action just prior to the midway point of the first half when junior Devan Case suffered a right leg injury after colliding with East Liverpool's Tyler Recktenwald and had to be helped off the field.

Bartolo's first huge save came against Shane Talbott when he smothered a hard drive right at him. Merrick Malin, a senior, gave the Red Devils a 4-2 advantage when his bullet deflected off of Adkins' hands and tickled the net, setting the stage for Bartolo's heroics.

Nykolas Pelley's shot was batted away by the Red Devils' senior, touching off a wild celebration among his teammates and in the stands by the large St. C. contingent.

"We talk about that all the time," Watt explained of Bartolo coming off the bench and doing the job. "When you're number is called and you have to come in and perform, you've got to perform at the highest level. Jonathan Bartolo did that today.

"He didn't back down and he wasn't intimidated. He was well-prepared, as Devan is, and he showed it. He came in and did the job for us under tough circumstances."

For Bartolo, it was all in his job description.

"I was hoping that all the work I've done in practice would kick in, and it did," Bartolo said. "I was confident going into the shootout because we practice penalty kicks a lot. I was pretty focused."

Things didn't start off too well for Bartolo, however. On the very first play in which he was involved, he turned the ball over deep in his own box, but the Ben Adams fired the ball over top of the cage.

East Liverpool finally broke the scoreless battle when Briar Meek finished a corner kick from Pelle at 23:30 of the opening half. The score would remain that way at the half despite a couple of golden opportunities by the Red Devils, including Jordan Vincent's shot that caromed off the crossbar in the final minute.

St. Clairsville took advantage of an unfortunate bounce by the Potters to draw even. Vincent volleyed the ball deep into the East Liverpool box where Talbott headed it. However, the ball went right past a stunned Adkins and into the back of the net at 26:56 of the second half. Vincent was credited with the goal as he was the last St. Clairsville player to touch the ball.

Each team had a couple of opportunities over the final few minutes, but each goalkeeper was up to the task.

"I'm just real proud of this team," Watt added. "They've stuck together all season long and it paid off today.

"They're a great team to be around because of the way they play and their sportsmanship. I love them."

Bartolo finished with seven saves on eight shots, while Case stopped the only one he saw. Adkins made 20 stops.



Photo by Kyle Lutz

Wheeling Park's Liz Nickell (5) moves in on defense as Brooke's Jena Riccelll tries to fend her off Saturday in St. Clairsville.

Park Beats Brooke For 5-A Crown

Schultz Scores Twice, Has An Assist in 3-1 Victory

By KYLE LUTZ
Staff Writer

ST. CLAIRSVILLE — For girls' soccer, Wheeling Park and Brooke always play great games against each other that they formed a respected rivalry. In the OVAC Class 5-A soccer championship game at Red Devils stadium, it was no different.

The Patriots (9-2-3) scored three unanswered goals to defeat the Bruins, 3-1.

"The game was intense as we thought it was going to be," Patriots coach Luke Hladek said. "That team and us, we are going to battle every time we are on the field. It's not always the most technically pretty game in the world, but it's constantly intense and constantly physical."

"It's always up in the air about who is going to come out in front."

In the opening minutes of the game the Bruins took the lead when Cheyenne Hudson headed the ball in the net with 35:28 on the clock to put the score at 1-0.

"I don't think we were under any illusions that we were going to run away with it," Hladek said. "We knew we may go down. I

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An Assist in 3-1 Victory

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Photo by Kyle Lutz

Linsly's Miya Kureishy (10) handles the ball amid the defense of Madonna's Mikaela Lenhart (21) and Dekota McCombs.

Linsly Girls Too Much for WM

By KYLE LUTZ
Staff Writer

ST. CLAIRSVILLE — The excitement of the Linsly-Madonna game made it feel even more like a championship game as the crowd was in it the whole 80 minutes. In the last game of the day at Red Devils Stadium, the Cadets scored four goals in the second half to answer the Blue Dons' two second-half goals and went on to win the OVAC 1A/3A girls' soccer championship, 5-2.

"I thought we played really well in the first half," Cadets (11-2) coach Chelsea Miazgowicz said. "I was a little bit worried there for a bit in the second half, but our girls were able to work together and get a bunch of shots off. I was so proud of them being able to get five goals."

Linsly was able to get on the board first with a Kaitlin Snyder goal with 29:32 left. Grace

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OVAC soccer changes format; Begins Monday

By KIM NORTH
Times Leader Sports Writer

The Ohio Valley Athletic Conference will crown six champions next Saturday as the soccer championships – boys and girls – unfold this week.

The tournament, which is broken down into three divisions (5A, 4A, 1A-3A), begins Monday with semifinal action at the higher-seeded team's home field.

The OVAC Tournament replaces the OVAC Cup, which crowned just one boys champion and one girls champion for the past several seasons.

Locally, St. Clairsville (7-1-1) earned the boys' Class 4A No. 2 seed behind East Liverpool (8-1-0) despite doubling up the visiting Potters, 6-3, Thursday night.

"East Liverpool has a very good team, but we played a very good game against them," St. Clairsville head coach Gary Watt said.

The Red Devils will host third-seeded Edison (4-5-0) Wednesday at Red Devils Stadium in a 5:45 p.m. start. St. Clairsville rolled past the Wildcats, 11-0, in recent action.

"We really didn't expect to win like that against Edison," Watt admitted. "They usually play us pretty tight, but we've been playing pretty well of late."

Seniors Zach Oliver and Zach Rigby are a pair of forces on the offensive end for St. Clairsville, as is sophomore Jordan Vincent. Oliver has scored 25 goals this season, but suffered an undisclosed right hand injury late in the first half against the Potters.

The other 4A semifinal pits No. 4 Harrison Central (5-5-0) against East Liverpool, also on Monday night, at Potter Stadium.

Beaver Local (6-5-0) finished third but didn't have enough games against OVAC opponents to qualify.

In other boys' action Monday, Class 5A No. 4 seed Steubenville (7-2-1) entertains No. 1 University (6-1-1) on the Reno Field turf inside Harding Stadium on Monday, while fourth-seeded Magnolia (2-4-1) and No. 1 Linsly (8-2-0) square off on the artificial surface at Wheeling Island Stadium in a 1A-3A semi.

On Tuesday, third-seeded Morgantown (8-2) travels to Jimmy Carey Stadium to meet No. 2 seed Weir (7-0-1) in a 5A semifinal. Also on Wednesday in 1A-3A, second-seeded Tyler Consolidated (6-3-1) welcomes No. 3 Steubenville Catholic (3-4-0).

The 4A finals kickoff Saturday's tripleheader at 10 a.m., with 5A at noon and 1A-3A at 2 p.m.

In girls' action, Harrison Central (2-6-2) earned the fourth seed and will travel to 4A top-seed East Liverpool on Tuesday. Also, top-seeded Brooke (9-0-1) hosts No. 4 Steubenville (6-3-1) in 5A, while No. 4 Trinity Christian (6-3-0) treks to No. 1 Linsly (9-1-0).

On Thursday, No. 2 Wheeling Park (7-2-2) entertains No. 3 Parkersburg South (6-3-1) in a 5A semifinal, while No. 3 Oak Glen (5-4-1) and No. 2 Edison (5-4-1) clash in 4A in Richmond. The 1A-3A semifinal in Weirton has No. 2 Madonna (8-3-0) hosting No. 3 Wheeling Central



Cadets Boys Pocket Title

By MATTHEW PEASLEE
Sports writer

WHEELING — Unlike most small-school coaches in the area, Linsly's Eric Fries opposes the new format of the OVAC soccer tournament.

That's not to say he will diminish the Cadets' 4-1 victory against Steubenville Catholic Central in the Class 1-A/3-A championship game on Saturday at Wheeling Island Stadium.

"Winning our division and the OVAC title was one of our goals this year and we accomplished that," Fries said. "I wish there was something bigger and better, like playing the whole OVAC like we did in the past.

"This one was a nice proving point."

In previous years, teams were not broken up into three classifications when playing for the title. Last year, Linsly fell to Morgantown in the



Photo by Matthew Peaslee

Sung Bok Yoo (11) and Mason George celebrate Linsly's OVAC championship victory.

championship game. This year, Morgantown won the Class 5-A tournament.

The Cadets (10-3-1) beat the

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Mohigans, 3-2, in their third game of the season.

Linsly has also played and beat other top teams in West Virginia like Fairmont Senior, Parkersburg South and Martinsburg.

"We've played the big schools," Fries said. "We don't have a soft schedule, we play hard throughout and we want to compete with the best teams; we love doing it."

Saturday's game against the Crusaders was just another stiff test.

"Steubenville Central played hard," Fries said. "They brought it until the end and we had to match it. It was a nice experience and

a good win."

Mason George got the Linsly offense going early with a goal less than seven minutes in. Colin Riley was credited with the assist.

"It was nice to get on the board quick and early so we could sit back and enjoy the rest of the game," George said.

He scored again, 13 minutes later, on an assist from Cory Cunningham. George has 24 goals on the season — the senior, one of 12 on Linsly's roster, scored 28 in 2013.

He's gunning for the school-record of 39.

George knows better than anyone that solid team chemistry has contributed to his individual success.

"We have a really good midfield," George said. "We've been playing together for a while now. Collin (Riley), Sung Bok (Yoo), Manuel (Flores), Cory (Cunningham). They all contribute and they all know where to be. It makes finding lanes easy."

Cunningham scored on a George assist at the 13:52 mark of the first half to give the Cadets a 3-0 lead.

But Catholic Central (4-5) answered with a goal at the 6:51 mark of the first as Mikey Irvin stuck with a ball 10 feet away from the goal before taking it in for the score.

