



## Concord-Carlisle 2, Nipmuc 1: Nipmuc's near miss

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WORCESTER — They say soccer is a game of inches.

This saying couldn't hold truer for the Nipmuc boys soccer team.

Warriors junior Tanor Jobe hit the post midway through the second half, putting his team within inches of tying the score. Instead, Nipmuc was denied a goal and eventually the Div. 2 state championship in a 2-1 loss to Concord-Carlisle yesterday at Foley Stadium.

"We came here to win," said Nipmuc coach Bill Leaver. "You pour your heart and soul out into the game and sometimes it just doesn't happen. Nobody wants to be second, so hopefully this is a lasting impression. (Concord-Carlisle) is an excellent, excellent team."

On a day where the weather was clearly a variable, the Central champ Warriors (15-5-4) were playing into a stiff wind in the second half, and it affected them greatly.

"The wind was a real factor," said Jobe, who finished the year with 17 goals. "Every time they took goal kicks, it just got over us. We weren't winning the ball in the air."

Off a centering pass from a free kick by midfielder Kelly Rooney in the 14th minute of the second half, Jobe found the ball and tapped it past Patriots keeper Cam McGrory, but the ball ricocheted off the post, returning to the safety of McGrory's hands and preserving a 2-1 lead for the Patriots.

The Warriors were not able to sustain any substantial pressure in the final 20 minutes of the game, and time ran out on the Nipmuc state title hopes that have been hanging in the air since 1994, when the Warriors last won.

"We just couldn't take it," said Leaver. "Mother Nature and the wind was a factor and we didn't respond well enough. We had too many scenarios of not being able to clear."

The state championship is the second straight for North champion C-C (21-1-1) and the third in five seasons. The Patriots are 22-2 in postseason play during that stretch.

"It's a testament to the kids," said C-C coach Ray Pavlik. "It's incredible, they just work so hard. We've played a tremendous amount of tournament games and just to be composed and knowing what to expect goes a long way."

The game-winning goal was scored unexpectedly by sophomore defenseman Stowe Simonton. It was Simonton's first point of the season.

"It came at the right time I guess, to win states," said Simonton. "It's an awesome feeling."

On the third Patriots corner kick in less than a minute, senior midfielder Alex Puchrik found Simonton after the corner was sent in by senior Aaron Nickelsberg for a 2-1 lead at the 32:38 mark of the second half.

"Having the wind at your back makes a big difference," said Pavlik. "The biggest thing was pressuring their backs and pressuring their midfielders so they couldn't give quality services to their forwards. I think we were able to limit those quality balls."

Concord-Carlisle's Mikey O'Brien scored first off a twisting kick in the 14th minute when he booted the ball out of midair from a pass by junior midfielder Ethan Atwood. The shot scooted just past the outstretched arms of Nipmuc goalie Andrew Morin into the back right corner of the net.

But it didn't take long for Jobe, who had a goal and two assists in the Warriors semifinal win over Southwick, to respond in a big way less than three minutes later.

When a Nipmuc ballhandler was tripped inside the 20, Rooney, junior forward Tim Peterman and Jobe lined up behind the ball for a free kick. Rooney tapped the ball to a crossing Jobe, who blasted a left-footed laser to the upper left corner of the net.

"Kelly asked me if I wanted to have the strike and I said, 'Yeah, I'll take it,' " Jobe said. "He just laid it off and I hit it top left."

Jobe led the Dual Valley Conference in points (19) and was second in regular-season goals (13).

"He's our go-to (guy)," said Leaver. "We count on both him and Tim to make things happen for us. And they do."

Jobe has high hopes for his team going into next season.

"Yes, we will be back," said Jobe. "We're going to win it next year."

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